UNION

WITH

OUR LORD JESUS CHIRST.

Saint Jure, Jean Baptiste de

UNION

WITH

Our Lord Jesus Christ

IN

HIS PRINCIPAL MYSTERIES.

FOR ALL SEASONS OF THE YEAR.

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BY THE

REV. FR. JOHN BAPTIST SAINT-JURE,

Of the Society of Jesus.

Translation Revised by a Father of the same Society.

Paradisum habemus multo meliorem et longe delectabiliorem quam primi parentes habuerunt, et paradisus noster Christus Dominus est.—St. Bernard, Serm. I., in Nativ. Dom.

We have a paradise much better and more delightful than our first parents had, and this paradise is our Lord Jesus Christ.

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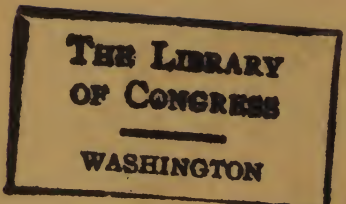

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APPROBATION.

John Card. McCloskey
Archbishop of New York

PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION.

THE Rev. Fr. John Baptist Saint-Jure, author of the book we present to the public, is too renowned for his learning and holiness of life to need any eulogium from us. The greater number of the works that gave him so distinguished a rank among the grand ascetic writers of the seventeenth century, are still in the hands of pious persons; and for more than two hundred years "*The Knowledge and Love of Our Lord Jesus Christ*," "*The Book of the Elect; or, Jesus Crucified*," "*The Master; or, Jesus Teaching Men*," have not ceased to produce in the Church most abundant fruits of sanctity.

It is therefore with reason that we are surprised to see forgotten during this long period, one of the *most excellent* of the works of this apostolic man. The "*Union with our Lord*

Jesus Christ in His Principal Mysteries" is in our day almost entirely unknown. The Catalogue of Writers of the Society of Jesus has not even given its title, and it seems to have escaped the researches of those editors who for some years past have been so zealous in reproducing the other works of the same author.

The edition that we now reprint in English appeared but a few months after the death of Father Saint-Jure. Unlike the preceding editions, it bears his name, and it contains some new matter on the union of the soul with our Lord by charity. It is, as it were, a spiritual testament of the holy man wherein he seems anxious to declare for a last time, that admirable doctrine on the love of Jesus Christ which during his long career he *never wearied* of teaching.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THIS short work of Father Saint-Jure which we present to the public is peculiar in its character. It is a book suggestive of matter for reflection and meditation rather than one intended for mere spiritual reading. Consequently it appears suited particularly to persons who are trying earnestly to advance in the practice and acquisition of the Christian virtues and the imitation of our Lord. To such persons we humbly recommend it, begging their prayers for

THE TRANSLATOR.

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UNION

WITH

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE MYSTERIES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Our predestination and salvation depend absolutely on our union with our Lord Jesus Christ, since, as the Prince of the Apostles tells us, there is no salvation out of Jesus Christ, and God has given to men under heaven or in the whole universe no other name by which they can be saved. "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) And our Lord, speaking of himself, assures us that everything in heaven or on earth is subject to his power, and that God, his Father, has placed all things at his disposal. "All power is given to me in

heaven and on earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18.) "The Father has given him all things into his hands." (John xiii. 3.) We must from this draw two important conclusions which we ought never to forget, but rather should recall each moment of our lives, and should, as it were, write everywhere in large characters, even with the golden rays of the sun, if this were possible. These conclusions are that we have a continual and inexplicable need of Jesus Christ for all that concerns our salvation, and that, consequently, we should exert all our efforts to unite ourselves intimately and inseparably with him.

Now this union is formed, practiced, and rendered perfect by sanctifying grace; by acts of the virtues, in particular of the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity; by the worthy reception of the sacred body of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, which, for this reason, is called Communion; by desires, by petitions, but chiefly by imitation of our Lord, which produces his likeness in us.

Inasmuch as it is in this likeness that the entire secret of our predestination and salvation consists, so he who bears it will infallibly be predestined and saved. The nearer we approach our Lord, the more we resemble

him, the more signs of predestination and salvation, the greater number of tokens of eternal happiness we shall possess. "Whom he foreknew," says the celebrated passage of St. Paul, "he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son: that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren." (Rom. viii. 29.)

"Behold," says St. Chrysostom, "the height of glory to which God raises thee, making thee by grace what his only Son is by nature, and calling thee from dust and ashes to the honor of being his brother. But to bring this to pass thou must resemble him; because those for whom God has from all eternity stored up special favors and whom he has looked upon with particular kindness, he has predestined to be one day like to his son in heaven, provided they be like him here on earth.

For this reason the Holy Spirit, speaking by the prophet Aggeus, gives to the Son of God a very significative and remarkable name, calling him the seal which the Father uses to mark his elect. "I will make thee as a signet, for I have chosen thee." (Agg. ii. 24.) Our Lord is the seal with which God signs all the predestinate; he impresses it upon them, and they must all be marked with it, for it alone

confirms them in their high estate and in their sovereign glory.

Thus St. Paul, writing to the faithful of the church of Ephesus, tells them that they are marked with Jesus Christ and bear his likeness. "In Christ you were signed." (Ephes. i. 13.) And St. John saw twelve thousand of every tribe of the children of Israel who were marked in the same manner. "There were twelve thousand signed." (Apoc. vii. 5.) He says that on the contrary the reprobate bear the mark of the beast, that is of Antichrist or the devil, and that it is engraved and stamped upon them.

It is, then, this mark and likeness which makes us adopted children of God, and assures our salvation. The noblest of God's designs, and the greatest work that he performs in heaven or on earth, is to form and represent his Son Jesus Christ in us.

The first and most sublime production of God the Father is the production of his Word in himself by eternal generation; the second is the production of his Word incarnate out of himself, in the most pure womb of the ever Blessed Virgin by the incarnation; and the third is the production of it in us by justification. The production of the Word in the

bosom of the Father is the glory of the Father; the production of the Word incarnate in the womb of the Virgin is the glory of his Mother; and the production of Jesus Christ in us is our glory, our salvation, and the most perfect disposition in which we can be to procure great honor to God. Therefore God, anxious for his honor and our salvation, ardently desires this representation of Jesus Christ in us, and acts continually in a thousand manners to produce it.

The Father, moreover, desires it, because, knowing that his Son humbled and annihilated himself for his glory, he wills that as a recompense he be exalted, and be made as it were, to exist in a glorious manner in us and in all things; for as he loves him solely he wishes to behold him everywhere, and to have no other object on which to look with complacency. The Son also desires it, so that his sufferings may not be in vain, and his designs may not remain unaccomplished; the Holy Ghost desires it, he who, having formed our Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, is constantly occupied, by means of the lights, inspirations, and assistance he gives in forming him morally in us, so that we may manifest him to the whole universe, expressed and

represented in our interior, our exterior, and all our actions.

Again, the Church, our mother, exerts all her efforts for no other object than to perfect in us the image of Jesus Christ, and to make us like unto him; and when she sees that we do not resemble him, she says, with St. Paul: "My little children, of whom I am in labor again until Christ be formed in you," (Gal. iv. 19,) who formerly bore gloriously the image of Jesus Christ, your Father and my Spouse, and who were very like to him in the purity of your lives, now that the irregularity of your conduct has effaced from your souls the features of that divine likeness, I am constrained to conceive and bring you forth anew to Jesus Christ, to retrace his features in you until you resemble him perfectly. Behold whither all the designs of God and of the Church tend, to making us like Jesus Christ—and behold also what should be the object of all our own intentions and efforts.

To accomplish this object we should, as it were, bind and unite ourselves to his mysteries, because his mysteries are his principal actions, and, what is more, they are nothing else but himself; for the incarnation, the nativity, the passion, the death, and the resurrection of our

Lord, are our Lord incarnate, newly born, suffering, dying, and risen. Hence to bind and unite ourselves to his mysteries is to bind and unite ourselves to him, and by that binding and that union to put on his likeness.

Our Lord desires to continue and fulfill in us, as in his members whom he would sanctify and save, all those mysteries which are the sources of our sanctification and salvation. Thus he desires to express and consummate in us his incarnation, his birth, his passion, his death, his resurrection and ascension, becoming in a certain manner again incarnate in us, being born in our souls, and enabling us to reproduce the characteristics of these mysteries and to practice the virtues he practiced in them. So what St. Paul says, namely, that he filled up those things that were wanting to the sufferings of Christ, in his flesh (Coloss. i. 24) in a general way, must also be understood of Christ's incarnation, his nativity, and all his other mysteries; it is necessary for us, if we would be saved, to fill up what is wanting in these mysteries, not in our Lord, in whom they were accomplished to the last degree, and who on his part did all that was requisite, but in us, who as his members and images are

bound to reproduce them according to our capacity.

Hence we must unite ourselves most carefully to all our Lord's mysteries, yet the greater part of Christians fail to do this. This neglect causes St. Bernard to say: "There are Christians to whom Jesus Christ is not yet born; there are others for whom he has not yet suffered; others for whom he has never risen; and others still for whom he has not ascended to heaven." (Serm. 4, de Resurr.) And then the saint gives the reason: it is because these Christians have not united themselves to these mysteries, have not been assimilated to them, and have not reproduced the virtues our Lord practiced in them.

In order not to incur this reproach, which would not only bring us confusion, but would entail upon us a great loss, we should enter into the mysteries of our Lord, considering that they are the sources of our supernatural life, and the fountains of living waters of which Isaiah said: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." (Is. xii. 3.) You shall joyfully draw the salutary waters of grace from the fountains of the Saviour; that is, from his mysteries, so that we may repeat with St. Paul: "We all, beholding the glory

of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) We, who are true Christians, consider the glory of our Lord, that is to say his mysteries, not timidly, nor with shame at the lowliness and meanness that appear on the exterior of some of them, but with a steady countenance and a resolute eye, deeming them all glorious, and so much the more so in proportion as they are more covered with infamy and dishonor for our salvation. We present ourselves before these divine mysteries as before clear and bright mirrors, and their rays fall upon us, transforming us into their likeness; thus, moved and impelled by the Holy Ghost, we go on from light to light—I mean from mystery to mystery—from our Lord's incarnation to his nativity, then to his circumcision, and so on to his other mysteries, in order to draw from each new traits of resemblance to Jesus Christ himself in our soul and body and in our whole being.

Now, it must be remarked that each of our Lord's mysteries is composed of two parts: the first is the body and exterior of the mystery, the second is its interior and spirit. The body and exterior is all in the mystery

that appeals to the senses: as in the nativity, the poverty, contempt, nakedness, cold, the manger, etc.; in the passion, the scourges, the thorns, the nails, the insults; in the resurrection, the coming forth from the tomb completely victorious over death, the brightness, beauty, agility, subtilty, and immortality of his sacred body; and the same with regard to the other mysteries.

The spirit and interior of the mystery is what passed in our Lord's soul while he accomplished it; first, the thoughts of his understanding with regard to God his Father, his holy Mother, his elect, all men, and every soul in particular; secondly, the affections of his will; thirdly, the intentions and designs he had in accomplishing the mystery, both for the glory of his Father and for our salvation; fourthly, the virtues he practiced in it, the humility, poverty, obedience, and the like; and finally, the grace he merited for us by those thoughts, affections, intentions and virtues, to have in a certain proportion the same thoughts, affections, and intentions, and to practice the same virtues in the same mystery, which is properly to enter into the spirit and assume the features and coloring of the mystery. For we are bound to believe

that as our Lord is the Saviour and pattern of men, he has merited for them by his operations in each of his mysteries, the assistance necessary to enable them to imitate those operations, and consequently to resemble him, and by that resemblance to make certain their predestination and eternal salvation.

It must be understood, moreover, that each mystery has its own spirit and character, that each is filled with a special grace and produces a particular impression, and that our Lord had in each different intentions for the glory of his Father and our sanctification, and thus different modes of preparing us for our beatitude. Just as the material sun produces different effects as he moves along his course and accomplishes his annual revolution, so when the Sun of Justice, our Lord, is in the mystery of his incarnation and thence casts his rays upon us, he produces effects of grace and other impressions of salvation, different from what he does when he is in the mystery of his birth or of his resurrection. Each mystery has its own light and warmth, its ideas and sentiments, its affections and virtues; these constitute the particular spirit of the mystery, its principle, its soul, so to speak, and consequently they

are what we should especially endeavor to understand and to imprint in our souls.

We should not, meanwhile, forget the body and exterior of the mystery, for he who would desire to imitate only its interior and spirit would assuredly deceive himself, and would be like a person seeking a man and then contenting himself with only a soul; for just as a man is not a soul alone, nor a body alone, but a soul and body joined and united, so our Lord's mysteries are composed of the union of the interior and exterior, and not of the one without the other. Moreover, the exterior of the mystery serves to dispose and prepare us to receive and appreciate the interior, and therefore should be studied first; for, even as God does not create the soul of man until his body be formed and organized to a certain point, so our Lord does not produce the spirit and interior; that is to say, the thoughts, affections, and fruits of his incarnation, his nativity, or his passion, in a man who is not first prepared by the exterior acts of those mysteries.

It is, then, necessary for whosoever would share in the grace, and receive the spirit of a mystery, for example, our Lord's nativity, to prepare himself by some act of poverty, by some

endurance of cold or discomfort; for he who would expect to profit by this mystery while retaining an affection for riches and pleasures, would grossly deceive himself, and would resemble a person turning his back to the place to which he desires to go; and this because the disposition of him who desires something must always have some conformity to the object of his desire.

As our Lord's mysteries are the vital principles and causes of our salvation, it is necessary, if we would be saved, that they be applied to us and in some sort renewed in us. As it is not enough for our salvation that we rise and ascend into heaven in the person of our Lord, who contained us all in himself by grace and by glory, if we do not also in our own persons rise and ascend into heaven; so it is not sufficient that we be incarnate, that we be born, and that we suffer and die in him, if we do not likewise accomplish these acts after his example in ourselves, because the imitation and re-accomplishment of these last mysteries in us is the road to the glory of the first. In the great mystery of our fall, and in consequence of our sad condemnation, not only we all once sinned in Adam, as St. Paul says, and were all driven from Paradise and died in him,

but, moreover, we are individually stained with sin, we are banished from that place of happiness, and we are subjected to the rigorous sentence of death. Our Lord's mysteries, the painful and the joyous, the ignominious and the glorious, must be renewed in us individually, their likeness must be impressed upon, and their effects produced in, every individual soul.

For this reason we should take great pains to unite ourselves with them, especially at the times when the Church proposes them to us because then they have more efficacy. We must believe that it is not without a reason that our Lord inspires his Church to put before our eyes at such or such a time the mysteries of his life, but in order that then more than at another time he may render them useful to us and communicate their fruits more abundantly. The prophet Isaiah indeed promises us that we shall draw joyfully from the fountains of the Saviour, which are his mysteries, the waters of grace, of the virtues, and of our salvation; but the prophet Zachariah adds that this shall be on *a certain day*: "In that day," he says, "there shall be a fountain open to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." (Zach. xiii. 1.)

It is, then, "in that day," that is at the time the Church directs, that the soul should draw those salutary waters from the mysterious fountains of the Saviour, because then they are open and send forth their waters with full force; whereas at other times, if they are not altogether closed, they are at least not so widely open and do not pour out their streams so abundantly. So, while the precious waters flow plenteously, the soul should take advantage of them; and thus she may reap more fruit in a single day than she would in six or eight at another season, as is related of the Blessed Mary d'Ognies in her life written by Cardinal de Vitry.

But, as dispositions are various and the movements of the Holy Spirit diverse, this does not prevent there being souls that have greater facility in entering into one mystery than into another, and drawing more profit from one than from another; such souls should stay and draw the waters of their salvation and advancement in virtue as long as the mysterious fount remains open to them.

You ask me now *how* we may unite ourselves to these mysteries of our Lord's life and death. I reply that, granted the knowledge faith gives us of them and which is suffi-

cient, it is chiefly by means of the affections and the virtues relating to them, as you will see when we treat of each of the mysteries separately.

We have arranged these mysteries and the practices of the union we should contract through them with our Lord, in the following manner:

From Advent to Christmas the practice will be upon the mystery of our Lord's incarnation.

From Christmas to Lent we will dwell upon the nativity, the circumcision, the adoration of the Magi, the flight into Egypt and the dwelling there, the return to Nazareth, and the entire hidden life of our Lord.

During the season of Lent we will study the passion and death of our Lord.

From Easter to the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord's resurrection and ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, will be our subjects.

From the feast of the Blessed Sacrament till Advent we will meditate upon the most Holy Eucharist considered as a Sacrament and a Sacrifice; we will endeavor to unite ourselves to our Lord in this adorable mystery by suitable affections, especially by faith, hope, charity, and imitation of him.

In each practice or exercise we shall always include six things which will be its six parts or divisions:

First, *the subject-matter* about which we are to occupy ourselves, that is, the mystery proposed for our consideration and practice. We shall dwell especially upon the knowledge of it given us by faith, without seeking other lights which very often only amuse and puff up the mind while drying up the will. Faith, and not learning or science, converted and instructed the world. Believe firmly the mystery just as the Church teaches it to you, and this is enough to cause it to produce in you its effects.

Secondly, *the affections and interior acts* which we must conceive and form according to the mystery, in which the soul should carefully exercise itself, and keep itself, as it were, buried during the whole season of the mystery.

Thirdly, *the virtues* most prominent in the mystery and the practice of which, both interior and exterior, we should embrace with special affection, and of which we should daily produce with fidelity and confidence, but without haste or embarrassment of spirit, a certain number of acts in proportion to our disposition and strength.

Upon this point I have an important counsel to give: some persons are afflicted, and complain that their souls do not open to the mysteries of our Lord; that when the great feasts come, then it is that they have least devotion, that then their understanding is more than ever darkened and they comprehend nothing of these wonders; their will is more than ever arid, so that they are obliged to remain dull and dry, as it were, at the gate of the mystery, without power to enter into it. I say to these persons that they should not be troubled, and complain of this; God does not require of them such a sensible appreciation of his mysteries, inasmuch as it does not depend upon them, but is purely his gift. They would like to have clear and beautiful thoughts, to be filled with devout affections and to burst into floods of pious tears, never considering that the key to the stores of such sensible light and devotion is not in their hands. All that God demands of them is that they apply themselves to our Lord's mysteries by an imitation of the virtues he practiced therein, by a practical reproduction of his mysteries in their daily lives; this they can do with the help of his grace, which he is always ready to give them; and this is the chief thing, for, as our

Lord's principal object in his mysteries was to effect our salvation and as a means to this, to render us virtuous, the accomplishment of this object in us by the practice of the virtues must be their most important and most necessary fruit.

St. Bernard, treating of the mystery of the nativity, says: "In order that Mary, Joseph, and the Infant cradled in the manger may always dwell in us, in order that we may enter into the mystery of our Lord's nativity, and that it may penetrate our souls, let us live in this world soberly, justly, and piously." (Serm. 4, in Nat. Dom.) And St. Paul, speaking on the same subject, teaches us in positive terms the same thing—not to seek to have grand lights nor lofty conceptions: "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly and justly and piously in this world." (Tit. ii. 11.) Our Saviour Jesus Christ, with infinite goodness and grace, has appeared as the Sun of Justice to the eyes of all men, to dissipate their darkness and teach them to avoid sin, to renounce worldly desires, and to lead lives of sobriety toward themselves, of justice toward their neighbor, and of piety toward

God. It is, then, in this way, a way all are capable of, that we ought to unite ourselves to our Lord's mysteries.

Fourthly, *meditations* on the mysteries of the season: these you can easily enough make yourself from the matter contained in each practice or exercise, dwelling upon whatever moves you most; or you can select them from such books as you judge most suitable.

Fifthly, *readings* appropriate to each exercise will be indicated, without however forbidding you to select others, provided they relate to the subject.

Finally, the sixth thing will be *ejaculatory verses*, which should be always in the heart and often on the lips, in order to keep the mystery fresh in the memory, and, by a constant recollection of it, to unite us to it, and, through it, to our Lord.

Besides all these, there are still three things to be remarked concerning the affections:

The first is the very common and injurious delusion of taking much more pains and employing much more time to cultivate and polish the understanding than the will, although merit, sanctity, and perfection in this life, are not in the understanding, but in the will. We seek only to learn, to enlighten our

mind, and to add knowledge to knowledge, and we neglect our will, which meanwhile needs to be carefully exercised in affections of piety and incited to the love and practice of humility, patience, and the other virtues, most particularly charity, wherein the perfection of the will lies. We all know quite enough, and much more than we practice. Who does not know that he ought to love God with all his heart, and ought to avoid sin above everything? And nevertheless how few there are who do it! The reason of this disorder is that our mind has an extreme desire to learn, and we naturally find much pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge, whereas our will is indifferent to virtue and must be constrained to practice it, thus obliging us to do violence to ourselves.

The second thing to be remembered is also another illusion that possesses a vast number of persons who in the spiritual life are governed too much by the senses; they wish to feel their spiritual operations, and, if they are not sensibly touched and moved in their devotional exercises, they are troubled, become uneasy, and believe they are making no progress. To disabuse these persons, let me assure them that the spiritual life is, as its name

implies, a life whose vital acts take place in the spirit, and not in the body. Material things make sensible impressions upon the body; thus fire makes itself felt in the hand by means of heat, and ice by cold. Spiritual things do not act upon the soul in the same manner, but insensibly, producing in it spiritual effects: which action consists in causing it to avoid evil and to do good, in enlightening its understanding with knowledge necessary for salvation, in strengthening its will so as to regulate its affections, that it may bear patiently its aridities and all its trials, govern rightly the movements of the body, and, in a word, practice all virtue.

If sometimes during exercises of piety the body is penetrated with sensible consolation, it is rather the pure effect of the grace and unction of the Holy Ghost, than of the spiritual operation of the soul.

The third thing to be remarked is, that when you desire to obtain some virtue or other favor from God, you should, among all dispositions and means, make use principally of prayer or petition, because by it you will attain your end more speedily, more easily, and more certainly, than by reading, meditation, or other operations of the understand-

ing. Therefore ask perseveringly by prayers, sometimes long, sometimes short, but always earnest, thus doing what our Lord and his apostles so frequently recommended, namely, to "pray without ceasing." (Luke xxi. 36; 1 Thess. v. 17.)

To induce our Lord to bless your enterprise and pour upon you through these channels of salvation an abundance of graces, it will be well to prepare yourself for each exercise by Communion and some other good works.

In conclusion, I say to all who are sincerely and earnestly desirous to be saved, that they should before everything else endeavor to unite themselves to their Saviour; that, seeking virtue, perfection, and God, they should exert all their efforts to unite themselves intimately with Jesus Christ, because he is the model of all virtues, the example of perfection, and the road by which to seek and reach God. St. Augustine says: "We have no road that is shorter and surer, we can conceive of no means more efficacious to approach and reach God, than Jesus Christ." (Aug. in Ps. cxviii., Conc. 6.)

Let us, then, take great pains to unite ourselves continually to him in everything, but

chiefly in his mysteries, according to the directions that will be given in this book. Certainly, as the well-being of a child depends on its remaining at its mother's breast, whence it draws the nourishment that makes it grow and become strong, so we, if we would grow in grace and become strong in virtue, must cling to our Lord in his amiable mysteries. Let us go to these fountains of the Saviour to draw with faith in their truth, with deep affection of the heart, and a desire of imitation by our works, the waters of our salvation and beatitude. In the churches, sings David in prophetic vision of these mysteries, "bless ye God, the Lord, from the fountains of Israel. There is Benjamin, a youth in ecstasy of mind." (Ps. lxvii. 27, 28.)

Praise and bless God for the fountains of Israel, which are the mysteries of his Son, in which the little Benjamin, that is, the soul, will exercise itself in a spirit of lowliness, simplicity, and faith, and in its exercises will have transports of admiration, reverence, love, humility, and other sentiments. Moses had previously spoken under the same inspiration: "Benjamin, the best beloved of the Lord, shall dwell confidently in him; as in a bridal-cham-

ber shall he rest all the day long." (Deut. xxxiii. 12.) Benjamin, the beloved of the Lord, shall dwell in confidence in these mysteries, and shall rest therein all his life long as in a place of peace, sleep, and repose.

CHAPTER II.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SPIRITUAL AIR THAT WE OUGHT CONSTANTLY TO BREATHE.

Spiritus oris nostri Christus Dominus.—Lam. iv., 20).
The breath of our mouth, Christ the Lord.

THESE are the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, which St. Irenæus, St. Justin, Origen, Tertullian, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and a multitude of other Fathers understand to refer literally to our Lord, to signify that he is the breath of our nostrils and the air that we ought constantly to breathe. Among all the things we need for our life and which we cannot dispense with, experience shows that the most necessary is, beyond doubt, air; without it we would surely and speedily die. The necessity for air arises from the fact that our life depends upon the preservation of the natural heat of the blood; this heat being very great, requires to be constantly cooled so that it will not extinguish itself; for heat is extinguished by its own intensity if it is not tempered by cool air, as is seen in fire in an oven, which goes out directly if the mouth of

the oven is closed, and in animals that are stifled to death. This is the reason why respiration is necessary to our life.*

The breath of our mouth, Christ the Lord.— Our Lord Jesus Christ is the breath of our mouth and the air our soul should breathe. Just as we have absolute need of the air for the natural life of our bodies, so, and in an incomparably greater degree, the spiritual and divine air which is Jesus Christ, is necessary for the supernatural life of our souls. We would soon die without air, and to prevent this we breathe it constantly every hour and moment, at all times and in all places; in like manner we have an extreme and indispensable need of Jesus Christ for all that concerns our salvation, and our souls cannot without him be for a moment alive and in a state of grace; therefore we must constantly draw him into us and inhale him.

Now, with regard to the manner of inhaling our Lord and drawing him into us, I will tell you that there are several different ways. We notice that the air we breathe is not always the same; that sometimes it is warm and some-

* The reader is reminded that this passage was written two hundred years ago, when the natural sciences were not so well understood as at the present day.—*Translator.*

times cold ; one day dry and the next damp ; in one place pure and rarefied, as on the mountains, and in another place, as in the valleys and over marshes, heavy and thick ; that the bodies of persons brought up in different atmospheres have different constitutions and tendencies, and even their minds are frequently affected by the same cause. In like manner, our spiritual and divine air, that is our Lord Jesus Christ, has different qualities in our regard ; and we must inhale and draw him into us according to this diversity.

First, we must inhale and draw him into us in his characters of our Saviour, our Redeemer, our High Priest, our Master, our Model, our Remedy for all our evils, and our Source of all blessings.

Secondly, we must inhale him in his virtues and draw him into us, sometimes humble, sometimes patient, at another time obedient, then meek, charitable, forgiving injuries done him, or according to his practice of some other virtue in our regard.

Thirdly, in his mysteries, we have to inhale our Lord incarnate, or newly born, or leading a hidden life, or conversing with men, or suffering and dying, or ascending into heaven, or in some other mystery.

When we have drawn Jesus Christ into us in these different manners, we must offer him to God his Father with most profound respect, with infinite thanksgivings to him for having given his Son to us in all these states, with an ardent zeal for the divine glory and a burning desire that he may, under these different forms, glorify and praise God as God merits, and that we, on our part, may with all our strength honor, love, and serve God in Christ and by Christ.

The reader may ask me, moreover, what means we must use to inhale our Lord, and with what chains we can draw him to us. I reply that it must be, in the first place, by acts of faith, believing firmly two things: first, that our Lord is truly such as his mysteries represent him, that he became incarnate, that he is our Saviour, our Redeemer, that he is humble, etc.; secondly, that we have an absolute need of him in these states, that without him there is no salvation for us, that without him we would be forever in bondage and misery, that without him we could never have a truly humble thought, and that we must derive from him all the good we are capable of.

Just as anything in our body that is not animated by our soul has no life, as our hair

and nails, so all in us that our Lord, who is our only Saviour and our true life, does not touch, is dead and lost. If his thoughts, his affections, his words and his works, do not purify and sanctify ours, the latter are stained and criminal; if his prayers do not animate and vivify ours, then ours are only aberrations, indevotion, and irreverence; if his sufferings are not applied and united to our sufferings, ours are useless and lost, and are no more than evils to us; and if his death does not communicate its merit and strength to ours, our death will be the death of a reprobate. "If I shall touch only his garment, I shall be healed," said the woman afflicted with an issue of blood. (Matt. ix. 21.) If I can but touch his robe I shall be healed; without this touch I shall never be healed, no matter what I do.

The second thing by means of which we must draw our Lord to us, is desires; and the third, petitions. For, as the lungs and heart by their dilatation attract the air, so the soul attracts our Lord when she opens and expands with her desires and prayers; whence it is that we may say with the Royal Prophet: "I opened my mouth and panted." (Ps. cxviii. 131.) I opened the mouth of my soul and drew my spiritual breath, which is

our Lord, who himself by the same prophet had commanded me, saying: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" (Ps. lxxx. 11) with great desires. We must enkindle in our souls ardent desires and burning wishes for our Lord to come to us in such or such a quality, in this virtue, or in that particular mystery, and we must beg him to come, pray him, supplicate him, conjure him with all the earnestness possible.

Let us say to him with Isaiah: "Thy name and thy remembrance are the desire of my soul." (Is. xxvi. 8.) Thy name and thy memory, the memory of thy incarnation, of thy humility, of thy character as my Saviour, is foremost in my mind, and I desire to draw thee to me in that state and in that beautiful and salutary character.

"My soul hath desired thee in the night; yea, and with my spirit within me in the morning early I will watch to thee." (Is. xxvi. 9.) My soul hath thought of thee during the night; with ardent affections it hath longed for thee in the mystery of thy birth. My eyes opened early in the morning to see if thou hadst come.

"I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord. . . My soul hath fainted after thy salvation.

. . As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God. When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. cxviii. 174; xli. 1, 2.)

O my Lord, how I long for thee in the mystery of thy hidden life, in thy virtue of patience, in the functions of pastor, physician, high priest, which thou dost exercise toward me, and which are the sources of my salvation! My soul faints through the vehemence of its desire. As the hart, pursued by the hunters and parched with thirst, runs with all its strength to the fountains to drink, so my soul, O my God and my risen Lord, runs to thee. Oh! how I thirst for Jesus Christ, my Saviour, for my sake withdrawn into the desert, suffering for me, for me obedient even unto death, so that he may come to me, may enter into me, may impress upon me the features of his virtues and his mysteries! And when shall I present myself to him marked with those noble features?

Again, say to our Lord with the same David: "Thou art my helper and my protector. O my God, be not slack." (Ps. xxxix. 18.) Thou art my help and my protection. O my God, do not delay thy coming. And with the Spouse

in the Apocalypse: "Come. . . Amen. Come Lord Jesus." (Apoc. xxii. 20.) Come, Oh! come, Jesus my Saviour, and say to me: "Surely I come quickly," thou shalt see me very soon.

With St. Bernard let us repeat to him:

"*Desidero te millies:*
Mi Jesu, quando venies?
O mi Jesu dulcissime,
Spes suspirantis animæ;
Te piæ quaerunt lachrymæ,
Et clamor mentis intimæ."
(Bern. Jubil.)

"A thousand times I sigh for thee:
O Jesus mine, when wilt thou come?
O Jesus mine, most sweet to me,
My panting spirit's hope and home,
In quest of thee 'mid tears and cries
My famished soul relentless flies."

Or, again:—

"*Jesu Christe, fons indeficiens,*
Fons humana corda reficiens;
Te suspiro te solum sitiens,
Tu solus es mihi sufficiens."
(Id. Orat. Rhythm, ad Chr. et B. V.)

"O Jesus Christ, unfailing fount of love,
O fount, the human heart's refreshing cup,
For thee I breathe, for thee alone I thirst,
For thou to me alone art all enough."

After the desires you should proceed to prayers and supplications, most earnestly begging our Lord for two things: first, that it may please him to come to you in this char-

acter, or in that virtue, or that particular mystery; secondly, that he will deign to bestow upon you the salutary effects of the character in which you invite him to come, that he will impart to you the knowledge, esteem, and love he had for that special virtue, and grant you to practice it as he did, and that he will communicate to you the lights and affections belonging to the mystery. Beg him to bestow on you the spirit and grace of that, and of all his mysteries, to apply to you their merits, and furnish you the assistance necessary to imitate the virtues he practiced in them; and in this way to impress upon you in a manner his incarnation, his birth, his solitary life, his conversation, his sufferings and death, and enable you to express and represent him incarnate, newly-born, solitary, conversing with men, suffering, dying, and dead, in your life and in your conduct.

This is what the Church often asks in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, as when she says: "*Tuos tantis, Domine, dignaris uti mysteriis, quæsumus ut effectibus nos eorum veraciter aptare digneris.*" (Dom. 3d, post Epiph.) "We beseech thee, O Lord, that we, to whom thou vouchsafest the enjoyment of so great mysteries, may be fitted truly to receive their

benefits." And again: "*Ut sacri peragat instituta mysterii, et salutare tuum in nobis mirabiliter operetur.*" (Dom. 3d Adv.) "Let the sacrifice of our devotion, we beseech thee, O Lord, be always offered unto thee; that it may both accomplish this sacred mystery, and also wonderfully work in us thy salvation."

In the fourth place, we may draw our Lord into us in a mystery by exercising the affections which have most harmony with it, and which we shall indicate in each division of this book.

The fifth means of drawing our Lord to us is the courageous and exact practice of the virtues, which you will also find indicated.

Behold, then, what should be our continual occupation and our most cherished practice! It is the perpetual breathing of Jesus Christ as our spiritual air, and then the breathing or sending him back to God his Father, to be our mediator before the Eternal Throne, our advocate, our refuge, our priest, and our sacrifice of adoration, expiation, thanksgiving and impetration, in a word, to be our all.

In addition to what we have already mentioned, we should, in order to practice this exercise still more perfectly, breathe and draw our Lord into us in his mysteries according as

the Church solemnizes them, or according as our devotion inclines or our wants oblige us.

You should draw him into you in his virtues, when you have occasion to practice those virtues, or to overcome the contrary vices; for example, when you ought to humble yourself, when you have to endure contempt or conquer a sentiment of vanity and self-esteem, inhale our Lord humble, teaching you interiorly to what degree he humbled himself for you, and saying to you: "Learn of me, for I am humble of heart." When it is your duty to obey, and to submit your will and judgment, inhale our Lord obedient and submissive; he will enable you to understand his perfect submission, and how he obeyed even unto death and the death of the cross for love of you. Do the same with regard to the other virtues.

But as our salvation and perfection consist especially in two things—in acting and suffering, we should imitate our Lord in both respects.

First, in acting. As we daily act and do something, and as our Lord, while on earth, did the same, we should in all our actions breathe our Lord acting, and should do everything with him, by him, and in him, in his fashion, both as to the interior and the exterior

of the act, the intentions, the moderation, the time, the place, and all other circumstances. Just as your soul is the cause of all the actions of your body in the natural life, our Lord, taking the place of soul in your supernatural and divine life, should be the cause or spring of all the actions of both your soul and your body; and then you may say with St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) I live; no, it is not I who live, but it is Jesus Christ who lives, thinks, loves, hates, speaks, and acts in me.

To act excellently toward God you must, in the following manner, draw our Lord to you and bind yourself to him: Our Lord was always recollected in God, always attentive to God, always occupied with God, keeping himself in spirit before the Infinite Majesty with extreme care, with singular modesty, with most profound reverence, and with inexplicable abasements, humiliations, and annihilations of self, uninterruptedly offering to God for the divine glory, his soul and body, his being, his faculties, his acts, and all that passed in the universe. Draw our Lord into you by conducting yourself in the same manner toward God, so as to do with Christ and

like him the same thing, according to your capacity.

When you are going to pray, either mentally or vocally, inhale our Lord praying to his Father; and seeing his attention, devotion, fervor, and respect, endeavor to imitate him in such a way that it may be he who prays in you and by you.

If you have the honor to be a priest and to say Mass, inhale him as your high priest who, in you and by you, sacrifices himself to God the Father for his glory and your salvation, and offers himself and you as a sacrifice of infinite adoration, in acknowledgment that God is your first principle from whom you derive your body, your soul, and all that you have; that he is your sovereign Lord who has absolute power over you to do with you whatsoever he wills, without your having any right on your part to oppose him by the least thought, or to contradict him by the least word; and that he is your last end for whose glory you were created, and for whom you ought entirely and constantly to employ and spend yourself. This sacrifice of the Mass is one of infinite propitiation to obtain the pardon of your sins and the remission of the punishment due to them; it is a sacrifice of

infinite thanksgiving to thank God for all the benefits with which he has loaded you ; a sacrifice of infinite impetration to obtain from him fresh benefits, that is, all the assistance you need. As Christ says the Mass with you and in you, say it also with him and in him.

By following this plan all the faithful, who, according to St. Peter, (1 Petr. ii. 9) are in a certain manner raised to the dignity of priests, may also in some sort say Mass, drawing to themselves our Lord who performs this action and offers this sacrifice.

After having drawn our Lord into you in the Mass as your priest, draw him in the Blessed Sacrament as your Shepherd who nourishes you with his own flesh and blood and gives you a divine food capable of producing in your soul, if it is well disposed, the effects of bodily food, which will be to strengthen it, delight it, satisfy it, unite it to him, and cause it to sleep and consequently to forget all creatures ; who will fulfill these words of the Wise Man : "With the bread of life and understanding he shall feed him, and give him the water of wholesome wisdom to drink," (Eccl. xv. 3,) the water of the wisdom of his salvation.

Having received our Lord, try to employ

well the precious moments, and beg this dear Shepherd to operate in you in a high degree all these effects.

To act in a Christian and holy manner toward your neighbor, draw into you our Lord, loving men, honoring, instructing, reproving them, bearing with them, having compassion on their spiritual and corporal miseries, giving them remedies, conversing with them. See him with the Samaritan woman, and remark with what gentleness, affability, charity, and prudence, he deals with her. Take courage to imitate him, breathe him in his gracious, amiable, and most useful discourse, in his modest and peaceful demeanor, in his condescension, his kindness, and his patience, and in all the other virtues he practiced in the highest degree during his intercourse with men; and study to reproduce in your conduct and conversation these features of perfection, these lineaments of graces.

With regard to the actions that relate to yourself do the same: for example, when going to take your meals, breathe our Lord taking his, either alone or in company, and consider his temperance, his sobriety, and his modesty. Laboring, traveling, or performing any other action, inhale our Lord engaged

in the same, and act with him and by his spirit, offering with the Wise Man this prayer to God: "Send wisdom out of thy holy heaven, and from the throne of thy majesty, that she may be with me and may labor with me." (Wis. ix. 10.) O God! send me from on high and from the throne of thy greatness, thy Son, the Incarnate Wisdom, so that he may be in me and may labor with me; for I am sure that without him I shall fail in everything, and shall do naught that will be of value.

Secondly, we must imitate our Lord in suffering. When you have to endure some suffering of body or soul, breathe our Lord suffering, so that he may communicate to you his patience and fortitude, and you may, as far as is possible, suffer with him for the same ends and in the same manner. There are souls that are always afflicted, and bodies that are always sick and infirm: let these persons as their sovereign remedy, draw into them our Lord fastened for their sake to the cross and thereon suffering inexplicable torments and extreme agonies; and when the moment of their death approaches, that moment which must decide their happy or unhappy eternity, or even now, and frequently, let them take great care to draw into them our Lord dying to

console and sanctify their death by his, and to make theirs a dependence and a consequence of his.

Behold, then, the method we must use to breathe our spiritual air, and to draw our Lord into us. As this is absolutely necessary for our salvation and our perfection, we must endeavor to practice it without relaxation, and, in order to do so, can make this compact with our Lord, namely, that each moment our body breathes the physical air, we will have the intention of breathing him and drawing him into us in one or more of the ways mentioned, or in all of them. Certainly, if our body is so anxious and careful to breathe continually the air for the preservation of its natural life, our soul should be vastly more careful to breathe unceasingly our Lord to preserve its life of grace. Then let it do so with as much diligence and fidelity as the importance of the affair deserves.

CHAPTER III.

PRACTICE OF UNION WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR THE SEASON OF ADVENT.

I.—THE SUBJECT.

THE practice of union with our Lord for the season of Advent, has for its subject the adorable mystery of the incarnation, and his dwelling during the space of nine months in the most pure womb of his holy Mother. The mystery of the incarnation is a mystery of union, a mystery of love, a mystery of glorification, and a mystery of annihilation.

It is a mystery of union, because the divine nature was in it united intimately, substantially, personally, and forever, with the human nature, and the Son of God became the Son of man. "*Verbum caro factum est.* The word was made flesh," (John. i. 14,) and the one formed with the other so close a union "that," St. Bernard says, "God and slime, that is to say, man made from the slime of the earth, were joined together in the inseparable unity of one person, and all that God did appeared to be done by the slime, and all that the slime

suffered seemed to be suffered by God in it, though a mystery as incomprehensible as it is inexplicable." (Serm. 2 in Vigil. Nativ.) And earlier than St. Bernard, St. Leo had said: "There is such a communication and so close a union between the two natures, while each retains inviolable its own qualities, that there is no division of goods nor of evils between them, but what belongs to one belongs also to the other." (Serm. 8 in Nativ. Dom.) So the Son of God by this union made himself, as St. Paul says, "in all things such as we are, without sin." (Heb. iv. 15.)

The incarnation is a mystery of love, because, as the principal and strongest inclination of the person who loves is to desire and procure by all the means he can devise, union with the person beloved, the love that God bore to man caused him to desire, to seek, and to bring about this admirable union. And this shows evidently and clearer than the sun the infinite greatness of that love which St. Paul so often describes to the faithful, and which he says surpasses all thought and language.

The incarnation is a mystery of glorification, inasmuch as human nature was in it raised to such a height of glory that there is no science nor power that can raise it higher. Speaking

on this subject St. Augustine says "that this elevation of human nature is so high and eminent that it cannot be more so." (L. 1, de Præd., Sanct. c. 1.) The reason is manifest, because human nature is raised in this mystery to the throne of the Divinity, and a true man is become true God. St. Augustine in another place says: "God desired to show in what esteem he held human nature, and what degree of honor he gave it among all creatures, when he was pleased to appear to the eyes of men as a true man." (L. de vera Relig. c. 16.)

The incarnation is also a mystery of glorification of the Divinity; because God, wishing to be infinitely glorified according to his merit, not only in himself, but also outside of himself, as he obtains the first by his Word which is the knowledge infinitely excellent and the sovereign esteem he has of himself, so for the latter purpose he has employed the only means possible, namely, the production of a creature capable of rendering him a glory absolutely infinite.

This he has done in the adorable mystery of the incarnation wherein that same Word is personally united to our nature in an individual humanity, to which, besides the created gifts bestowed upon it that incomparably surpass

all those he has granted to all other creatures, he has communicated substantially all his infinite perfections, making it infinitely holy, perfect, and capable of glorifying God infinitely; and this in two manners:

The first, by the simple manifestation of those perfections; for, as St. Augustine says, "the beauty of creatures is the glorious testimony and the praise they render to him who created them." (Serm. 143, de temp.)

The second, interiorly, by his own acts, which the Incarnate Word always referred to the honor of God, and which, being all infinitely excellent on account of the infinite dignity of his person, all honored God infinitely. This second manner is also exterior; for our Lord by his example and teachings induced men to honor God, and he is, moreover, the cause of all the honor and praise that are offered to God and that will be offered throughout all eternity, and the principle of all the good works that will ever be done in the world, since they are due to his merits.

This is the reason why the Sacred Scriptures frequently call the Incarnate Word the especial glory of God; (Ps. lvi. 9; lxxxiv. 10; Is. lx. 1; Rom. iii. 23) and the celebrated words of St. John: "*In principio erat Verbum, et Ver-*

bum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum," (John i. 1,) express the same meaning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word that is God is the eternal and infinite glory of God, because it is the thought of infinite esteem which he has of himself and which is justly proportionate to its object. "And the Word was made flesh," and we saw the glory of God that is that same Incarnate Word, the Son of God, the honor and glory of his Father, even as the wise son, as Solomon says, is the ornament and glory of an earthly father. (Prov. x. 1.) "The Word was made flesh;" therefore, at the moment of his birth, the angels sang "*Gloria in altissimis Deo*,"* as though they meant to say: We can now give to God in this Child all the glory he is worthy of; and it is this Child that gives it to him, and all creatures likewise can give it in and by this Child.

Thus it is that our Lord Jesus Christ in his quality of the uncreated Word, is the infinite glory of God in himself from all eternity; and as the Incarnate Word, he is still the infinite glory of God in himself and outside of himself for all eternity to come. This shows us that

* "Glory to God in the highest."—(Luke ii. 14.)

the incarnation is, as we have said, a mystery of glorification of the Divinity.

It is, finally, a mystery of annihilation, in the person of God, because, in order to unite himself to us in that manner and to testify his love for us by so indisputable a proof, and to elevate us to the height of infinite glory, it was necessary for him to humble, abase, and annihilate himself, making himself man, a son of Adam the sinner, a poor man and a miserable creature, and consequently a mere nothing, as the creature is of itself. St. Paul teaches us this great truth in these remarkable words: "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but debased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man." (Philipp. ii. 6.) The Son being God by essence, and not deeming it an injury to his Father to esteem and call himself God, nevertheless annihilated himself, taking the nature of a servant when he took man's nature, and when he appeared both in body and soul in all things like us.

The incarnation is a mystery of annihilation in the humanity of our Lord, because that humanity was despoiled of its natural personality, annihilated to itself and to all that

distinguishes the person of a man; and still further, it was annihilated in all the inclinations of man for honors, comforts, and pleasures, the Word to whom it was united, leading it in the very opposite ways of opprobrium, poverty, and suffering.

The incarnation is a mystery of annihilation in our Lady, who, to be capable of assuming the character of Mother to the Man-God, had to be humbled and annihilated in her own estimation below all creatures.

Our Lord, during the nine months that he dwelt in the most pure womb of the Blessed Virgin, as in the purest and holiest place on earth, was ceaselessly occupied in praising, blessing, adoring, thanking, and loving his Father, and in offering to him his soul and body, his being, his faculties and their operations, for that Father's glory and the salvation of men. He addressed him at the instant of his incarnation these words of the Royal Prophet which the Apostle repeats: "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou has fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come, that I should do thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 5, 6, 7; Ps. xxxix. 7.) I know that neither peace-offerings, nor holocausts, nor victims

slain for the expiation of sin, please thee ; but that thou hast given me a body to be sacrificed in their stead. Thou hast thus decreed ; I submit. I offer myself cheerfully for the execution of the sentence, and I give myself to thee to do with me all that shall please thee. Our Lord also occupied himself in justifying and sanctifying his holy Mother, and in enriching her with gifts and graces ; he likewise thought graciously of all men, and of you in particular, and he yielded himself in spirit to suffering, infamy, and death, for your salvation.

Now, although the womb of the Blessed Virgin was the holiest place in all the universe and the one most worthy of receiving our Lord, still, in view of his infinite majesty as God, and of the perfect use he had of his reason as man, and of all the graces and wonderful gifts he possessed, the obscurity and lowliness of that dwelling where he was shut up in general privation of all the objects of the senses, causes the Church to say to him with St. Ambrose and St. Augustine : "*Non horruisti Virginis uterum.*" Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb, thou hadst no horror to enter it in order to accomplish our salvation.

II.—THE AFFECTIONS.

1. Admiration.

The first affection will be admiration and astonishment founded upon the grandeur of the mystery, and upon the grandeur of the benefits of which it is to us the source.

Regarding the grandeur of the mystery it is enough to say: *Verbum caro factum est*—The Word was made flesh—because these words contain in a few syllables the novelty of novelties, the wonder of wonders, the miracle of miracles, that join in the same person greatness with littleness, dignity with lowliness, beatitude with misery, immortality with death, eternity with time, all with nothing, the Creator with the creature, and God with man.

That God should become true man, and man true God, is something so strange and so above finite comprehension, that no created reason with all its power can understand how it was possible. The most magnificent and most perfect of all God's works and his incomparable master-piece, is, says St. Denis the Areopagite, the incarnation of his Son which so far surpasses our intelligence that the most enlightened of the angels with all his natural intellect

understands nothing in it. *(St. Dionys. de div. nomin. c. 2.)*

When we see a machine worked by some excellent engineer producing extraordinary and unexpected effects, we are astonished and look on in admiration. The change of King Nebuchodonosor into a beast, which, however, was not a change of substance and nature, but only of exterior appearance and of certain operations, impressed and terrified all the people of the time and all posterity. What admiration and delight then should we not experience at beholding the union of two natures infinitely diverse by which God became true man and man true God; by which the infinite was changed to the finite, the immense received limits, the omnipotent became weak, the most happy miserable, the immortal subject to death; by which God led the life and performed the actions of man, and man those of God? "*Quis audivit unquam tale*," Isaiah cries out, "*et quis vidit hinc simile?*" Who ever saw or heard the like? The same prophet remarks that for this reason the first name given to the Incarnate Word will be *Admirable:* "*Vocabitur nomen ejus Admirabilis*," his name shall be called *(Admirable)* Wonderful. (Is. ix. 6.)

Our admiration and astonishment ought to have also for their object the grandeur of the benefits we receive from this mystery, and which are comprehended in these words: "*Et habitavit in nobis.*" (John i. 14.) The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us! By this dwelling he has delivered us from all our evils and has loaded us with his blessings; he has united our nature to his divine person, and consequently, by the bond of relationship that we have with him in his human nature, has raised us to the sovereign honor of an alliance with God; he has dissipated the darkness in which we were plunged and were wandering miserably and blindly to our damnation, sending us the clear daylight of truth and enabling us to see the sure road of our salvation; he has destroyed the power of the devil and the tyranny of sin; he has closed the gates of hell and opened to us those of paradise, that we may there live forever in happiness with him.

The Church in admiration calls this mystery a commerce and a wonderful traffic: "*O admirabile commercium!*" And she has great reason, because therein our Lord has given us his divinity and taken our humanity; he has conferred upon us his riches and his glory and

has taken upon himself our poverty and infamy. What a traffic! What graces! What inexplicable favors! If a king should send to a poor villager overwhelmed with misery in his little cabin, ten millions of dollars, the poor man would undoubtedly be extremely astonished and surprised at such an unexpected gift from a prince, and without any merit on his part. This is what happens in the mystery of the incarnation, and in a far higher degree, both as regards the infinite greatness of the gift that is made and the infinite greatness of the giver, as well as the infinite littleness of man who receives it.

2. Gratitude.

For this reason man, moved by this inestimable benefit, should break forth with all the fullness of his affections into praises, benedictions, and thanksgivings to God, saying with David: "The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever." (Ps. lxxxviii. 2.) I will bless and thank him for them eternally; and with Isaiah: "O Lord, thou art my God, I will exalt thee and give glory to thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, thy designs of old faithful. Amen." (Is. xxv. 1.) O my Lord! I gladly tell thee that thou art my God; I

will praise thee and will glorify thy holy name with all my power, because thou hast done admirable things in the incarnation of thy Son which was the effect of thy love, and of those eternal thoughts thou hadst of my salvation, and the inviolable promises thou didst make of it, which thou hast executed in good time. Then he should exclaim in the words of the apostle: "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gifts!" (2 Cor. ix. 15.) Praise, adoration, and infinite thanks be offered to God for his unspeakable gift, which is his Son incarnate.

Certainly St. Bernard is right in telling us: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and therefore be not proud; and also remember that, even dust as thou art, thou art united to God, and therefore be not ungrateful." (Serm. 2 in Cant.) And when he says in another place: "This benefit ought never to be forgotten by those who have received it, and there are in it two things upon which they ought to deeply reflect: one is the manner in which God conferred it—he emptied himself for us; and the other is the profit we have received from it, which was to fill us with him." Ingratitude for so great a benefit would be something fearful, and would deserve a terrible punishment.

3. Love.

As the love that God bears us was the true cause of the personal union he was pleased to contract with our nature, and the source of all the blessings we receive from it, we ought to accept that sovereign honor and the treasures of those immense blessings with sincere and ardent love. As God comes to us through love we ought to go to him in the same way, and with much greater reason, since he is of himself worthy of infinite love, and we of ourselves are only worthy of hate. The gift he has made us of his Son, and that which the Son has made us of himself, obliges us all to this love, and should force the most obstinate hearts. Love attains the highest degree of its perfection and exerts its last effort when it confers a gift commensurate with the power of the giver; when this gift is something most precious and which the giver cherishes above all things; when it is made without constraint or obligation and in a disinterested spirit; and when, moreover, it is very necessary and very useful to the one who receives it; if you add to all these conditions the fact of the giver bestowing it with great difficulty and extreme pain, you can say nothing more. Now, all

these qualities are combined in excess in our Lord who was given to us in the incarnation, and who therefore exacts from us with perfect right a most ardent reciprocal love.

4. Desires and Petitions.

We should conceive burning desires and should ask most earnestly that our Lord would deign to come to us in this mystery. The just men of the Old Law earnestly prayed for the coming of the Messiah; they greatly desired and sighed for it, and offered many petitions, and supplications, and vows, and tears, to draw him from heaven. Each one of them was, as well as Daniel, a man of desires, *vir desideriorum.* Send, O Lord, they said, send him whom thou hast resolved to send. "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour, and let justice spring up together. O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down." (Is. xlv. 8; lxiv. 1.) Thou, O Saviour, so greatly desired, burst the heavens and come quickly. We cannot wait for thee to come by ordinary ways, we are so anxious for thee, so eager to behold thee.

The first sentiment of her love that the

Spouse revealed, and the first word from her lips in the Canticle was, according to the usual interpretation of the Fathers, an expression of the desire that filled all humanity. and especially the synagogue, the desire of the coming of the Messiah, and the prayer she offered to obtain it. Let the Divine Word, she cried, uniting his nature to mine, give me the kiss of peace, reconciling me with God his Father, and teaching me not only by his angels and prophets, but by himself and with his own words, the doctrine of my salvation.

In the eighth chapter of the same book, as the Fathers explain the passage, this transport of desire escapes from her heart and lips: "Who shall give thee to me for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find thee without and kiss thee; and now no man may despise me?" Who will do me this favor, O Divine Word and only Son of God! that I may see thee clothed with my nature and shrouded with my flesh, and thus become my brother and the son of my mother? Who will help me so that I will not be obliged to seek thee in the bosom of thy Father where thou art hidden from all eternity and enveloped with inaccessible light, but may find thee in the womb of thy Mother, or clinging to her

breast? Who will give me to see thee with my eyes, to hear thee with my ears, to touch thee with my hands, and, holding thee fast, to attach myself to thee by sentiments of faith, love, joy, gratitude, respect, adoration, obedience, and homage, so that none may dare to contemn me, since by this mystery thou art become my brother and my spouse, and I thy sister and thy beloved?

In other passages the Spouse declares that he whom she sought was *Totus desiderabilis*, the All Desirable; and she calls him the end of all her desires and the object of all her longings.

Our Lord in the Apocalypse calls himself *Amen*, which is a Hebrew word meaning, in its primitive signification, "it is so, it is true," because he is true and truth itself. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness." (Apoc. iii. 14.) In its secondary signification the word Amen is a prayer, or an expression of desire, "God grant that it may be so." Thus our Lord, the Amen, is the term of all our wishes, and his incarnation is the accomplishment of all our desires. The Mosarebs called our Lady when she was in the ardor of her desires for the incarnation, and especially on the day of the incarnation

when the great mystery was accomplished in her, our Lady of O, because the first word that escapes our heart and lips when we greatly desire a thing is, *O utinam*—Oh! would to God. The seven anthems of the *Magnificat* which the Church sings during the seven days before Christmas and which all begin with O, refer to this; they are all desires and prayers urging the Eternal Word to come and accomplish the mystery of the incarnation.

Let us, then, desire with all the earnestness we are capable of, and ask with all our strength, our Lord to come to us, to effect in our souls and bodies his incarnation, to impress its features upon us and communicate to us its grace and spirit. Let us continually inhale and draw the incarnate Word into us by acts of faith, by desires, by supplications, and by the burning words of the patriarchs, so that he may do for us what his divinity did for his humanity, which was to sanctify it, strengthen it, deify it, and render it so agreeable and glorious to God that the least of its actions, its slightest glance and most trifling movement procured infinite honor to the Eternal Father, and immense treasures of blessings to men; and that we may have grace likewise to imitate his sacred humanity in all the duties it performed toward the

Divinity to which it was not only united substantially and personally, but to which it continued to unite itself by its own interior acts, by its love, its adorations, its glorifications, its thanksgivings, its zeal for God's honor, its submission to his decrees, etc. Let us beg him to become incarnate in us; and, as his incarnation is a mystery of union, of love, of glorification, and of annihilation, to operate in us in an eminent degree all these effects.

III.—THE VIRTUES.

The most important point in these exercises is the effective expression of our Lord's mysteries, by the exact and constant practice of the virtues he practiced in them, the principal ones of which we shall always be careful to propose.

1. Union with our Lord Jesus Christ.

As our Lord so graciously and lovingly united himself to us in his incarnation, we ought, in order to express and represent this mystery, to exert all our efforts to unite ourselves to him. We ought to unite ourselves to him through the motives of love for him and zeal for his glory, and the knowledge of our extreme need of him. For, as our nature

became innocent, holy, and perfect, only by union with the Word, we can individually share its regeneration only by uniting ourselves to the Incarnate Word.

God himself gives us an example of what we must do to form this union with our Lord, and teaches us our lesson in it. First, as he took pleasure in uniting himself to that sacred humanity, we should imitate him by finding in our union with our Lord our satisfaction and our chief delight. Secondly, as he united himself to that humanity in order to come and unite himself to us, and through it to confer upon us his gifts, we should go to him likewise through it, should by it unite ourselves to him and render ourselves capable of receiving his gifts and the effects of his goodness. Thirdly, as he united himself to that adorable humanity in order to draw from it his own glory and to accomplish our salvation, we should in the same way unite ourselves to it in order to promote God's honor and to save our own souls. Assuredly, since God throughout all eternity has performed no greater act, none more excellent, none more glorious to him and more useful to us, than when he united himself to that most holy humanity, we, similarly, can do nothing that will render more

glory and praise to God, nor that will be more advantageous to us, than to unite ourselves to it. Finally, as God united himself to that sacred humanity intimately, inseparably, and forever, not forsaking it at the hour of death, let us likewise contract with our Lord an intimate and eternal union, such a union as neither death, nor life, nor anything whatsoever can destroy.

2. Zeal for our Lord's Glory.

It is certainly most reasonable that, since the Eternal Word became incarnate, and in his incarnation humbled himself and made use of his divinity and his humanity to exalt us, we should do all in our power to procure for him all the glory we can. The Greek Fathers call this mystery a Descent, because in it the Son of God descended infinitely low, and caused us to ascend infinitely high ; they also call it a Condescension, because in it he exercised unspeakable goodness and condescension in order to accommodate himself to us ; he assumed our degradation in order to give us his glory ; he united himself to our poverty to fill us with his riches, and he charged himself with our miseries to give us a share in his felicity.

This is why, sensibly touched by this most admirable abasement, and completely won by this incomparable desire of our Lord for our glory, we should conceive a burning zeal for his, and by all possible means endeavor to procure him honor. We should breathe only his praises, and should refer to them all our thoughts, all our affections, all our plans, all our words, and all our works. We should consecrate our souls and bodies to his glory, employing for it all our strength, using and consuming ourselves for it, so as to recognize in some degree, although infinitely unequal, the prodigious things he has done, and the unutterable sufferings he has endured in order to raise us from the dust and place us in a state of glory and honor.

Besides we are bound to apply ourselves with all our powers to glorify God. God's glory is the end of the incarnation of the Eternal Word, and, in general, the end of all that God does; because his will cannot propose as the last end of all his works anything but his exterior honor and the glory he can receive from his creatures, this being the thing that of all outside himself is best. Consequently, God's glory is the end of our creation and preservation; save for it we would still be

in nothingness, therefore we ought to refer to it all that we are, since we exist only for it.

Our Lord traced for us the model in his own person, having from the moment of his conception until his death acted incessantly for this end, whence he said: "I honor my Father. . . I seek not my own glory. . . I have glorified thee on the earth." (Jno. viii. 49; xvii. 4.) I glorify my Father, to his glory I refer all my thoughts, all my affections, all my words, and all my works; I seek not my own glory. And still, now in the highest heaven, he refers to the same intention of God's glory, and he will for all eternity, his body, his soul, all that he does and all that he will ever do; and with him, and in him, all men and all creatures who are in a certain manner contained, purified, sanctified, and deified in his sacred humanity; and moreover, he offers them all for the same intention, out of himself and in themselves, as things that belong to him.

Let us then follow this perfect model, and, in order to do so, let us unite ourselves intimately and inseparably with Jesus Christ by sanctifying grace, by acts of faith, hope, and charity, by desires and petitions, as to the first cause, the general and only instrument

of all the exterior glory offered to the Divinity, for this purpose making ourselves but one with him, as we are in reality, since we have the honor to be members of a body of which he is the Head.

Let us spiritually unite our souls to his soul, our faculties to his faculties, our thoughts to his thoughts, our affections to his affections, our words to his words, our looks, our steps, our motions, and all our actions to his which are infinitely honorable to God, so that all that belongs to us may take from all that belongs to him a divine lustre and coloring.

Let us fill ourselves with his spirit, which is a spirit of pure devotion to the glory of God, since his incarnation, his birth, his life, his death, and all his mysteries, have no other end than God's glory.

Let us very frequently offer him, as a treasure that belongs to us, to God, to glorify God in every manner and as much as he merits. Let us also pray him to offer us with himself, as one of his own possessions, for God's glory, and in himself as being contained in him.

Still more, let us very frequently offer ourselves for the honor and praise of God with God himself. To understand what I mean, we must first know that God is our Creator

who has formed our bodies and souls. David says: "He made us, and not we ourselves." (Ps. xcix. 3.) We also learn this from reason and experience, which teach us that nothing can make itself. Secondly, that he is our preserver who not only has given us being, but who preserves it to us; and as preservation differs from first production only in some little formalities, and is in substance and essence the first production persevered in and a continued creation that follows its first plan, as the life of our body is only a perpetual flow of life from the soul over it; so to say that God preserves us is only to say that he constantly communicates being to us, and always produces our bodies and souls, and produces them in such or such a manner—a healthy body, an infirm or sickly one; a robust, weak, beautiful, or ugly body; a body of a melancholy, bilious, or other temperament; a soul with much, or with little, or with no talent, memory, judgment; a soul sometimes gay, sometimes sad, now consoled, then desolate, afflicted, pained, tempted, and with such and such a species of temptation. God creates our souls and bodies in these different dispositions, and sometimes in several different ways in one day.

Thirdly, it must be carefully remarked that

God makes our bodies and souls thus for his own glory, and produces them in these different states in order to procure to himself by means of each of these different dispositions a particular kind of honor which he could not derive from any other. This is why, if you tell me that if you had more talents, more judgment, more capacity than God has given you, if your body were stronger and healthier than it is, you would in your opinion render him more honor than with the body and mind you have; I will reply that truly you might with a different body and mind render honor to God, but not the kind of honor he desires from you, which only your body and your mind just as you possess them can render him.

An artisan uses instruments of different sizes and shapes to fashion his works, and a small and bent instrument will not do what a large and straight one will, but will be good for some other part of the work. In embroidery the different silks used to form a flower all produce effect, each according to its particular color and shade; and in music, the different tones produce harmony, but each in its own particular manner. Just so a healthy body and a sick body, a great mind and an inferior one, a rich man and a poor man, and, in general, all

creatures in the universe in their marvelous diversity, serve God in their different ways, and each in its own way renders him an honor which it alone can render him.

We know very well that God has created us for his glory and our own beatitude, but we are ignorant of what particular glory he requires from us, and to what degree of beatitude he has designed to raise us, whether it be to a place in the choir of angels of the lowest order, or among the archangels, or with the highest seraphim. And further, we know not by what particular means we are to execute these two great works of the glory of God and our own beatitude ; God alone knows this ; he alone knows in what manner he desires to be served and glorified in you and by you, and to what measure of grace and happiness he has predestined you ; and likewise, he alone knows by what means you are to reach it. The only means capable of procuring him that particular glory he desires and expects from you, and of bringing you to the degree of grace, perfection, and eternal felicity he has assigned you, are your body and soul just as he has made them, the dispositions of light or of darkness, of consolation or of desolation, of unction or of dryness, of peace or of disquiet and temp-

tation, in which he puts you to-day, at this hour and moment, and the present condition, office, and employment to which he has called you.

Therefore, as God truly present and dwelling in us, constantly creates for his own glory our bodies and souls in all the various dispositions of nature and grace wherein they are at each moment, and refers them to his honor and praise, thus making for himself in us perpetual sacrifices, and taking infinite complacency in all these dispositions because he creates them, according to the words of the Prophet king: "The Lord shall rejoice in his works," (Ps. ciii. 31) and because in their varieties they are the true and only means by which he gains from us the particular honor he requires at that moment; we should unite ourselves to him dwelling in us, and should, as it were, second him, agreeing to all that he does in us for his glory and with him taking pleasure in it, esteeming ourselves happy to be able to concur with him in so noble a design, and very frequently referring our bodies and souls in all their states to his honor.

Let us in this imitate our Lord in whom the Divinity, sanctifying and deifying the humanity by its personal union with it, consecrated

and applied it to its own glory; and that most sacred humanity referred to and employed for the same end without any intermission, its soul, its body, its essence, its faculties, its operations, and its whole being.

The last thing that we must understand is the practice of this divine glorification in us and by us.

It consists, first, in accepting and bearing with a great desire and an ardent zeal for God's glory, all the dispositions and changes that he produces in us, in our bodies and souls, in whatsoever manner they may come to us.

Secondly, in accepting and bearing them in a spirit of faith, with a sentiment of esteem and approbation of his will; with submission, with humility and great respect, with patience and fortitude, with silence, with love, and with joy.

Thirdly, in referring very frequently during the day our body and soul, our being, our powers, our actions, and all that we are to God's glory, uniting ourselves to him in order that he in us may refer them to that end, imitating the example our Lord has given us of this.

The more frequently, the more perfectly,

that is, with the more zeal, the more faith, and the more of the other virtues, we shall do this, the more excellently we shall glorify God and the greater honor we shall render him.

In conclusion, remember that as God's will is always invariably fixed to desire and claim his glory, the shortest, easiest, and surest way of glorifying God is to will precisely all that he wills ; and in proportion as we do this with more or less resignation, abandonment, and destruction of our own will, the glory we render to God will be greater or less.

3. Self-Abasement.

Our Lord annihilated himself in order to unite himself to us and to raise us to the degree of honor we now enjoy. "*Semetipsum exinanivit*," says St. Paul. Therefore, let us annihilate ourselves for him, let us labor to destroy and annihilate in us all that is ever so slightly contrary to his glory and our perfection ; let us annihilate our spirit, our judgment, our will, our desires, our inclinations and humors, and let us undertake this task courageously and faithfully. And truly, if he who is All and Sovereign Majesty was pleased to become nothing, and to humble himself

infinitely that he might make us something great and exalted, we who intrinsically are nothing, are under all imaginable obligations to abase and annihilate ourselves for him, at least so far as nothing can abase itself. To incite you to this, keep continually in your mind, and very frequently on your lips, these words, "*semetipsum exinanivit*," he debased himself, he annihilated himself.

IV.—MEDITATIONS.

V.—READING.

(Under these two headings Father Saint-Jure suggests matter for meditation and reading, taken from pious books of his own composition, or from other authors; but as they are not all easily to be found in English, we shall generally omit what comes under these titles.)

VI.—ASPIRATORY VERSES.

These verses, together with those scattered through our pages, may serve to fix the mystery in our memories, to bind our spirits to it, and to help us to inhale our Lord and draw him into us; for this reason we should during

the day frequently repeat them, now one, now another, according to our dispositions.

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." (Jno. i. 14.) These words should be repeated with faith, love, and reverence, and sometimes with bended knee as the Church requires of her priests when they repeat them in the Mass.

"Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. cxliii. 3.) Lord, what is man that thou shouldst make thyself known to him, even visibly and in his own nature? And the son of man that thou shouldst have regard to him? If thou consultest thy own knowledge thou wilt find that man is only vanity, *homo vanitati similis factus est.*

"*Semetipsum exinanivit*, he emptied himself." (Philipp. ii. 7.) He annihilated himself.

CHAPTER IV.

PRACTICE OF UNION WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FROM CHRISTMAS TO LENT.

I.—THE SUBJECT.

THE practice for this season will have for its subject the mysteries of our Lord's nativity, his circumcision, the adoration of the kings, the offering his holy Mother made of him to God his Father in the temple, his flight into Egypt and his dwelling there, and all his hidden life.

We must regard with the eyes of faith, with a simple and attentive gaze, our Lord in the stable, laid in the manger upon the straw, with our Lady and St. Joseph and an ox and an ass for his company; we must behold him suffering the wound of a sharp knife and testifying the violence of his pain by his tears; and so on, we must study him in the other mysteries of this season.

II.—THE AFFECTIONS.

The affections and interior acts we should conceive toward our Lord in these sacred mysteries are the same that moved the shep-

herds and the royal magi; and, to seek still more perfect models of these sentiments, the same that filled the hearts of our Lady and St. Joseph.

1. Faith.

Our first sentiment should be a lively faith that this little Child is the true God, that beneath this lowliness and this mean appearance is concealed the full glory of the Divinity, that under this feebleness lies the strength of the Omnipotent, under this silence the Eternal Word and the wisdom of the Father; that in this little child, weeping and shivering with cold, is contained the joy of the angels and of all the blessed, and in this little creature the Creator of the universe.

Thus, looking at this Child in the manger on the straw, we will not confine our gaze to his flesh nor to his miserable surroundings, but, enlightened by a strong faith, we will, with piercing glance, penetrate the depths of the mystery and discover there the Divinity resplendent with glory, though enveloped with the cloud of this sacred humanity, and we will exclaim with St. Thomas, but in a spirit of more perfect faith: "*Dominus meus et Deus meus*—My Lord and my God!" (Jno. xx. 28.)

Yes, this little Child is my God, and I desire no other besides him, even as there is no other. Yes, this little Child is my God, my true and legitimate Lord; this Child who weeps is my joy and my beatitude; this Child so poor and destitute of necessary things is all my treasure; this Child so tender and feeble is all my strength; this Child so humiliated and abased is my sovereign glory; this Child who utters not a word is my master and my wisdom; this Child of a day is my Eternal Creator: *Dominus meus et Deus meus*—he is my Lord and my God.

2. Adoration.

After the act of faith we must make an act of adoration. This will naturally and easily follow the act of faith; when you firmly believe that a person to whom you are presented is your king, this belief immediately produces in your mind an impression of respect for his person, and impels you to bow profoundly before him; you find no difficulty in doing this, because it appears to you so just and reasonable. After your act of faith you will experience the same reverence toward our Lord, and you will adore him with the Blessed Virgin, with St. Joseph, with the magi, and

with the angels who received, St. Paul says, the command to adore him at the moments of his incarnation and his birth. And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith: "And let all the angels of God adore him." (Heb. i. 6.)

If the Seraphim and Cherubim adore him, and through reverence bow down before his majesty, how much more reason have not we who are but dust, and besides are under far greater obligations to our Lord than the angels are, since, as the apostle says, he did not take their nature to save them, but ours to save us—how much more reason have not we to adore him, to humble and abase and annihilate ourselves in his presence? Therefore, let us say to him:

I adore thee, O little Child and great God; I adore and honor thee in union with the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the magi, and the angels, with sentiments of the deepest respect and profoundest reverence I am capable of. And as the angels adore thee in heaven in the bosom of thy Father and on the throne of thy glory, with humiliations and abasements that exceed our thoughts and words, I adore thee in the crib and on the bosom of thy Mother,

with, at least in desire, the same respect and submission.

3. Admiration.

It is a spectacle worthy of extreme admiration to see the Eternal the child of a day, the Immense reduced to limits, the Impassible suffering, the Immortal subject to death, the Rich needy, Joy weeping, Beatitude miserable, Speech dumb, Light unillumined, Authority submissive, Wisdom taught, Power supported, and God, before whose Majesty the Seraphim and Cherubim are but atoms, lying in a manger upon straw between two animals.

St. Bernard, beholding the sight, cries out: "Who will not admire, and who can sufficiently admire a thing so admirable and strange? God eternal, Son of the Most High, begotten before ages, is born a little Child." And the prophet Habacuc, fainting from astonishment, says to this Child: "Lord, I have considered thy works and was afraid." (Habac. iii. 2.) Seeing thee not in heaven among the angels, but in a stable between two animals.

4. Gratitude.

Words are inadequate to express how much gratitude we owe our Lord for having come

down to earth for our sake and placed himself as we see him in the stable. He said of himself, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." (Jno. xvi. 28.) Behold two terms, two places, two conditions, widely different—that he left, the bosom of the Father, the splendor of glory, majesty adored by angels, the state of infinite beatitude—and that to which he came, a stable, a manger, poverty, contempt, and misery! When we think of St. Alexis whom the Church calls the most noble of Romans, when we think of him in his father's house abundantly provided with all his heart could desire, and on his marriage-day loaded with favors and honor, and then a few years later sleeping under the steps of his father's palace, unknown, poor, scorned, and mocked by his own servants, we are greatly surprised to see the same person voluntarily in two such different conditions. But in our Lord we see a change still more extraordinary, and which caused his Father to say by the prophet Abdias: "Behold I have made thee small among the nations. Thou art exceeding contemptible." (Abd. i. 2.)

This change accepted for our sake by the Son of God, demands in return a most un-

bounded gratitude. If a king should come from the ends of the earth to visit you, you would consider yourself under obligations to thank him; and if in coming he had suffered very much, you would feel yourself under still greater obligations; and if he came to deliver you from most serious evils that were afflicting you, and to bestow upon you all sorts of favors, you would deem yourself less than the brutes if you were not overwhelmed with gratitude. Oh! what sentiments of gratitude ought we then to have toward our Lord! what thanksgivings we should offer him, since he is far more exalted than any king, and comes from a much greater distance than the ends of the earth, and endures excessive sufferings in order to deliver us from our evils and to enrich us with blessings that are incomparably more precious than those any earthly king could bestow!

5. Love for our Lord.

The mere sight of what takes place in the stable should fire our hearts with love for our Lord. God, knowing that so long as he remained invisible and insensible, man, who in his operations depends greatly upon the senses, would always have much difficulty in

loving him, to take away this difficulty and remove all the obstacles to the love he requires of man, made himself visible and sensible in the most lovable and charming manner possible, by becoming a man like unto us ; he made himself our Brother and our Spouse, titles most powerful to attract and oblige us to love.

What is more, God became a creature, God is a little child, God lies upon the straw between two animals, God is miserable, and for us ! After that we do not love him ? Has not St. Paul good reason to say : "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema ?" (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) If any one after such obligations does not love our Lord, let him be anathema.

And the mark of the sinner that he takes in his circumcision, and the precious blood that he painfully spills in that mystery, and with such extreme ignominy, and so soon ! Does not this force us to love him ? St. Bernard exclaims in admiration : "The Son of God found himself on the day of his birth less than the angels, because he found himself man ; this is wonderful. But on the day of his circumcision I see something more admirable and more astonishing still, because in that mystery he

made himself less than the angels by taking, besides the nature of man, the form of sinful man." (Serm. 3, de Circumcis.) Thus Holy Church says on the feast of the Circumcision : "*Propter nimiam charitatem suam, qua dilexit nos Deus, Filium suum misit in similitudinem carnis peccati.* On account of the excessive charity with which he loved us, God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."

Our Lord, both as God and man, was absolutely impeccable, and there is nothing so contrary to God as sin. Riches are certainly opposed to poverty, greatness to littleness, joy to sorrow, and life to death ; but sin is still more opposed to God. God easily brought together and united in his person those first things, though so different from him ; but he could not do the same with the last—sin. We have seen him at once rich and poor, great and small, happy and miserable, immortal and subject to death ; but we never saw him holy and a sinner. Hence, the more sin is contrary to him and the more he is the enemy of sin, the more plainly he has declared the excess of his love for us by deigning to take the mark of sin, and doing so willingly and lovingly in the desire rather to compromise his own honor than not remedy our ills.

Truly, it is going very far in the way of love that the Son of God should not be content to prove his affection for us by becoming man, by being born a little child, poor, contemned, and subject to every discomfort; but that he should desire to appear that which he is not, and which he can never be, a sinner, and to bear the vile character and the shameful mark of sin, which he holds in horror and cannot endure. Being unable to be a sinner, for our salvation he assumes the appearance of one. Oh! what love, and what benevolence!

Who can describe the good will and the ardent affection with which in the temple he offered himself to God his Father for us, and offered himself to be scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified? What a wonderful proof of love thus to give himself to us, and to allow us to possess him in exchange for so little, for the sigh of a repentant heart, for a morsel of bread and a cup of cold water given to a beggar! while to purchase and possess us, though there is no comparison between his value and our worthlessness, he gave all his blood and sacrificed his life, so great was his desire to give himself to us and to win us to him!

All these proofs our Lord has given us of

his love, demand of us for him all the love our hearts are capable of. The prophet Isaiah said to him that if he should make himself man and should descend to such abasements for us, and should work those miracles of love that are seen in his nativity, the most obstinate would be unable to withstand his efforts, but would surely melt into tears; the haughtiest spirits would humble themselves, hearts of stone would break, and the coldest souls would enkindle with his love with so much the more ardor as he lowered himself for them to depths so unworthy of his Majesty. "The mountains would melt away at thy presence, they would melt as at the burning of fire; the waters would burn with fire; when thou shalt do wonderful things we shall not bear them." (Is. lxiv. 1, 2, 3.) "The more he abased himself for me," says St. Bernard, "the dearer he is and the more I love him, because he has made himself more amiable." (Serm. 1, in Ephiph.)

St. Paul, to move us to this love, says that "The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared," (Tit. iii. 4) when, to show his love for men, he appeared to them clothed with their nature, lying in a manger, and bearing the mark of sin. Commenting upon which

words of the apostle, St. Bernard adds: "How could our Lord display more plainly his goodness than by uniting himself with my flesh? Was there a means of showing more clearly his mercy than by assuming our miseries? And what more certain proof of his benevolence could he give than to reduce himself, the Word of God, for our sake, to the condition of the grass of the field?"

Who that believes these truths and reflects upon them with any degree of attention, can fail to consider himself under positive obligations to love our Lord with all his heart, and to prove his love by deeds, just as our Lord proved his for us, not by words, but by wondrous works?

God the Father, on the day when his Son was presented to him in the temple in his own name and in ours, and in that of all the human race, gave him back to his holy Mother, to let us know that it is to her he gives him, that she must give him to us, that to her we must address ourselves if we will have him, that without her he shall never be possessed by us. To her, therefore, we are indebted for Jesus Christ, since she is his Mother, and without her consent to the proposal the Archangel Gabriel made her in

God's name, on the day of the Annunciation, a consent she was free to give or to refuse, we would never have obtained him, and consequently we would never have had a a Saviour nor a salvation. On the feast of the Purification she receives him anew from God the Father in order to again give him to us.

Therefore, we possess Jesus Christ, and in him all our happiness, only through the Blessed Virgin, and but for her he would not be ours. St. Bernard says: "God has so decreed that we can possess nothing that we do not receive from Mary's hands." Hence we must infer that we are also under infinite obligations to honor her, to love her, and to render her endless thanksgivings and every possible homage.

We should make our offering of the Son to God the Father in the dispositions of the Blessed Virgin, with a most profound interior and exterior humility, with singular reverence, with great devotion, with cordial tenderness, with unspeakable gratitude for having given him to us, with ardent zeal for his glory, and with all other affections; we should offer him as the dearest and most precious thing we possess, to be our mediator with the Father,

our advocate, our pledge, our ransom, our sacrifice of glorification to procure infinite glory to God, our sacrifice of propitiation to obtain the pardon of our sins, our eucharistic sacrifice to thank him for his benefits, and our sacrifice of impetration to obtain fresh benefits, in fine, to be before the throne of God our all.

God the Father having received his Son from us, gives him back to us to be our Saviour, our Redeemer, our protector, our consoler, our physician, our model, our strength, our wisdom, our riches, our glory, our peace, our joy, and our all. "Christ is all, and in all," says St. Paul. (Coloss. iii. 2.)

Our life should be a continual exercise of offering and giving with these sentiments, Jesus Christ to God his Father, and of receiving him from God; and as he is given to us with infinite love, let us receive him with most ardent love.

Then, enjoying your happiness and the inestimable favor that is done you, with the holy old man Simeon, take the dear child in your arms, and gazing upon him with faith, respect, gratitude, joy, hope, and love, remember that even as that holy old man could not

die until he had first seen Jesus Christ according to the promise he received from the Holy Ghost: "He had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord;" (Luke ii. 26,) and as he sang: "*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace;* now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace," (Ib. ii. 29,) only when he held him in his arms pressed close to his heart; so it is impossible for you to die to your vices, to your bad inclinations and your corrupt nature, or to sing your *nunc dimittis*, that is, to bid a last farewell to them all, and to enjoy the peace of the children of God and true rest of spirit, until you hold Jesus Christ in your arms, which will only be when you are united eternally and intimately with him, in your understanding by meditating upon his mysteries, and in your will by loving him.

6. Joy.

If the possession of a good be the legitimate object of joy, a joy that goes on increasing in proportion as the good is greater and the possession of it more secure, our Lord's nativity should be to us a cause of inexpressible joy on

account of the infinite blessings it brings us, and which are so securely ours that no one in all the world can steal them away without our consent.

Isaiah, referring to this mystery, says: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen." (Is. ix. 2.) They that were shrouded in darkness and that fainted with weariness in the regions of death, found the day in their midst when the Sun of Justice who came to give them life was born.

At the rising of this Sun the angel said to the shepherds: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." (Luke ii. 10, 11.) There is born to you, to you who were condemned and lost, a Saviour; to you who were sold, a Redeemer; to you who were captives, a liberator; to you who were sick, a physician; to you who were afflicted, a consoler, and the One who will deliver you from all evils and bestow upon you every blessing.

"Let us rejoice, my brethren," says St. Leo, "because our Saviour is born this day; for

there is no place for sadness where life has birth." (Serm. 1, in Nat. Dom.)

Let us conclude with the sweet and forcible words of the eloquent St. Bernard: "We have heard in our land a glad voice, a voice of exultation and salvation has resounded in the tents of sinners; we have heard a good word, a word of consolation that should cause us great joy, and that is worthy of being well received.

"Praise God with joy and gladness, O ye mountains! and you, O ye forests and woods, shake your branches as though clapping your hands in the presence of the Lord because he is come! Hearken, ye heavens, and thou, O earth, lend thine ear, and let all creatures in the universe break forth into canticles of wonder and thanksgiving! But thou, O man, sing louder still, for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda!

"Is there a heart so hard as not to be melted by the sweetness of these words? What more welcome news could be brought to us? What more agreeable could be told us? When has the world ever heard, or seen, or received the like? Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda! O short sentence, but filled with heavenly delight."

(Serm. 1, in Vigil. Nat. Dom.) Thus St. Bernard discourses on the birth of our Lord, and the great cause of joy which it should be to us. Let us, then, rejoice, but in a holy manner, and so let us accomplish what the angel said to the shepherds, and to us in their persons

7. Hope.

As these reasons well considered are sufficient to fill our hearts with a torrent of delight, they should also fill them with a great hope in our Lord as the remedy for all our ills. It is true we have many, both spiritual and corporal; sin has loaded us down with them; still, since the coming of our Lord they have ceased to be ills, because we have in him a powerful remedy for them, which, instead of longer afflicting ourselves, we should think only of making use of. If a person who is worth a hundred millions of dollars owes five cents, he does not worry about his debt, because he knows he has most ample means with which to discharge it. The means which we possess in Jesus Christ for deliverance from all our miseries are incomparably more ample. Therefore the angel says to us as well as to the shepherds: "Fear not, for this day is born

to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." (Luke ii. 10.) He is called Jesus, that is Saviour, because, as the angel explained to St. Joseph, he will save men and deliver them from their sins, and consequently from all their miseries, of which their sins are the true and only causes. This divine Saviour is born for us; he is ours. "A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us," says the prophet Isaiah. (Is. ix. 6.) A little Child is born for our salvation, the Son of God is given to us by his Father to ransom us from our captivity and to enrich us with all his treasures.

Our Lord himself says: "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son." (Jno. iii. 16.) God loved men to such a degree that he gave them his Son. The word *give* is used, not lend, nor sell, nor exchange; by the absolute title of gift Jesus Christ is ours, he belongs to us, he is our property, and in such a way that there is nothing we possess more entirely than we do him; no power, neither of angels, nor of men, nor of demons, can take him from us without our consent; God himself, omnipotent as he is, cannot deprive us of him, because he has *given* him to us, and God's gifts are on his part irrevocable.

Our Lord being ours, all his treasures belong to us, since, according to a just rule, the accessory follows the principal; he who gives the tree, gives likewise the fruit. Hence St. Paul having said that God gave us his Son, adds: "How hath he not also, with him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) Thus it is that we have in Jesus Christ, who is Lord of the whole universe, a superabundant remedy for all our miseries, and we are infinitely enriched in him and by him. "You are filled in him who is the head of all principality and power." (Coloss. ii. 10.) "In all things you are made rich in him, so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace. (1 Cor. i. 5, 7.)

From this we must be certain that our Lord is our chief hope, that he is the efficacious remedy for all our miseries, the cure for all our ills, the sovereign balm for all our wounds, and the true consolation for all our sorrows. Therefore we must have recourse to him in all our necessities, we must go to him freely, frankly, and with the simplicity and confidence of a child, of a brother, and of a friend. If we go in this spirit, he will not fail to deliver us from the evils that afflict us; or, if deliverance be not for our good, he will give us what will be much better, patience, resig-

nation, and strength to bear our burdens to the end.

Look at our Lord in his crib as upon one of the thrones of his mercy, and say to him: O dear and divine Infant! thou art my hope; thou, the only Son of God, the omnipotent Creator of the universe, the treasury of all blessings, thou art my hope, thou art my refuge, my support, and my whole confidence. Thou hast taken my flesh to remedy its infirmities and weaknesses; thou hast taken my soul to release it from its sins and deliver it from all the defects to which it is subject; thou hast taken poverty to make me look to thee for aid in my temporal necessities; I behold thee shedding tears because thou dost desire to wipe mine away and to console me in my sorrows. O divine Infant! Thou art indeed my sweetest hope!

8. Sorrow for our sins.

If the birth of our Lord is a mystery of joy, it is also a mystery of sadness; and if the angel said that he announced a subject of great joy, he might have added that he gave us a motive of lively sorrow for our sins. Truly, could there be anything more capable

of exciting in our hearts an intense regret for our sins, than the frightful extremity to which for their atonement we have reduced the divine Majesty? than a sight of the Son of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, becoming a creature, becoming a man, a miserable man? than to behold him born in a stable, laid in a crib between two animals, poor, contemned, and destitute of every comfort? than to see God a little child, God lying upon the straw, God weeping, God chilled by the cold, in order to appease the anger of the Father irritated. against us, to satisfy the divine justice and pay our debts? We may say to him in the words of the prophet Abdias, though using them in a different sense: "Behold I have made thee small among the nations; thou art exceeding contemptible." (Abd. 2.) Alas! Why are we so unfortunate as to have reduced God to this?

If it were necessary for the expiation of a crime committed by one of the people that the king, the queen, the princes, and all the chief personages of a kingdom, should weep bitterly, should traverse the streets with naked feet and clothed in sackcloth, and should fast on bread and water for an entire year, and the offender, witnessing all, were

not sorry for his fault, would it not be a sign that he was out of his senses? How then can we, if we have our reason, not regret our sins which have brought Infinite Majesty to the strange necessity of covering itself with the sackcloth of our mortality, of being born in a stable like a beast, and of suffering all that it has?

This is why we should testify to God extreme regret for our offences which have reduced him to such a lamentable state, and with all the earnestness of which we are capable should beg him to pardon them. Assuredly, as children easily forgive, this divine Infant will forgive us.

9. Desires and Petitions.

May our Lord be born in us, may he accomplish in our hearts his spiritual circumcision, may he impress upon them his other mysteries, may he give us the grace and spirit of those mysteries! such should be our aspiration, and to attain it we should seek to draw him into us in all his states.

It is necessary that the birth of our Lord, his circumcision, his poverty, the contradictions, the scorn, the persecutions, and the other characteristics of his life on earth, should

be reproduced in his elect while they are pilgrims here below. The great St. Leo, speaking of the birth of Christ, says: "The generation of Jesus Christ is the generation of all Christians, the birth of the head is the birth of the body; even as we have been crucified with our Lord in his passion, have risen with him in his resurrection, and have ascended with him to the right hand of God his Father in his ascension, we were born with him in his birth." This is to be understood not only of the natural and moral union which we have with our Lord, but still further and more particularly of the care we should take to engrave upon both our interior and exterior the virtues and features of his mysteries. We must have great desires for this and must pray for it earnestly and continually, and thereby attract our Lord into our souls to produce this effect in them.

III.—THE VIRTUES.

1. Professed imitation of our Lord.

One of the chief reasons why the Son of God was pleased to clothe himself with a human nature and dwell visibly among men, was to teach them the just value of things

which they were very ignorant of, and the road to salvation which they traveled but blindly. This office belonged to him more particularly than to the Father or the Holy Ghost, because he is by his personal perfection uncreated wisdom and truth itself, and by his mercy incarnate wisdom, to which properly belongs the teaching office. For this reason the prophet Malachi calls him the Sun of Justice (Mal. iv. 2), who would by the rays of his example and words show justice to men ; that is to say, in the first place, what virtue and perfection are, and in the second place, the relative value of heaven and earth, the soul and the body, eternal and temporal blessings, riches and poverty, honor and opprobrium, prosperity and adversity, and the measure of esteem we should have for these things. And Christ, speaking of himself, calls himself the Light of the world : "I am the Light of the world." (Jno. viii. 12.) And again : "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me may not remain in darkness." (Jno. xii. 46.) I am come to make known to men what is true and what is false, what is good and what is bad, what is precious and what is vile, what should be carefully treasured and what should be scorn-

ed and avoided. Behold why I have come. In another place he says: "Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, Christ." (Matt. xxiii. 10.) Be not ambitious to be called doctor and master; for you have a doctor and a master, who is Jesus Christ.

If Jesus Christ is the master and doctor, he must have a school and a chair. Where then is his school, where is his chair? His school is the stable of Bethlehem; the crib is the chair whence this divine Doctor, this admirable Master teaches men and appoints their lessons.

Yes, but from that chair he utters not a word. True; but in his silence he speaks much, and even more than he could say in words, because his doctrine is not speculative but practical; he has not come to teach us to talk well, but to do well, and this is learned much better from works than from words. As St. Bernard says: "He does not speak, his tongue is not yet loosened, for he is a child only just born; nevertheless, all that is in him speaks, crys, and proclaims his doctrine." (Serm. 3, Nat. Dom.)

But what is his doctrine? What does he teach? He teaches things which are diametrically opposed to the opinions of men. The

same Father says: "*In omnibus mundi judicium arguitur, subvertitur, confutatur.*" (Serm. 3, Nat. Dom.) The judgment which men form of the value of things, is condemned, overthrown, and destroyed by all that is seen in our Lord in the crib.

It should be remarked that men from the beginning of the world always esteemed riches more than poverty, honors rather than opprobrium, pleasures before pains; the Eternal Wisdom came to eradicate these old opinions, to make them understand that they were false, and to impress upon their minds very different ideas. It would have been just as easy for the Son of God to be born in a magnificent palace as in a stable, to be laid in a cradle of gold studded with diamonds as in a manger upon straw, to have kings and princes around him instead of an ox and an ass; he could have chosen to be born in summer rather than in winter, at noon instead of at midnight, and in the midst of every comfort and luxury rather than in the greatest destitution. It was not his will; on the contrary, he wished to appear to our eyes poor, contemned, weeping, and trembling with cold, in order to show us our wrong estimate of temporal things, and to give us a knowledge of their true value. It is

as clear as the sunlight that God, wise and blessed as he is, would never have suffered in his person so much pain and sorrow, and abased himself to the humiliations of the stable which were so unworthy of his divine Majesty, merely to deceive us and persuade us of a falsehood.

Therefore let us stand firmly, and although the world continues to persevere in its old opinions and errors, let us believe that it deceives itself, since Eternal truth thus assures us of it by his actions. Let us remember the argument of St. Bernard, to which there is no reply: "Either our Lord or the world is mistaken; now it is impossible that Wisdom should be mistaken, otherwise it would not be wisdom; hence we must conclude that it is the world that is mistaken. Still further, the prudence of the flesh is called in the Holy Scriptures folly, seeing that Jesus Christ who is uncreated and incarnate wisdom, and who consequently cannot be deceived, has chosen that which is most distasteful to the flesh, we must necessarily infer that it is the best and most useful for man and what he ought to choose; and, that whosoever shall teach or persuade us of the contrary must be shunned as a seducer and a cheat." (Serm. de Nat.)

Let us then picture to ourselves our Lord in the stable and in the manger as our divine Doctor and only Master in his school and in his pulpit, giving us his lessons and addressing to us by his works these words of Isaiah: "This is the way; walk ye in it and go not aside, neither to the right hand, nor to the left." (Is. xxx. 20.) This is the way to salvation, to perfection, and to heaven; if you turn from it, you will fall into precipices.

Look upon him who is the King of kings to whom belongs the entire universe, and who is the Creator of all the riches of the world. He has been pleased to be born poor and in want of the most necessary things, to teach us how he esteems poverty more than riches, and how we, after his example, should esteem it; to reprove us for our excessive affection for earthly blessings, and our undue care to provide for our needs, and our impatience and murmurings when we have not all we desire.

Look upon him who is the God of glory and the Infinite Majesty, in the state of extreme humiliation and annihilation to which he has reduced himself, to teach us humility, and to reprove our pride, our vanity, and our open and hidden seeking after the honors of the

world and the esteem of men. Thinking of this, St. Bernard asks: "How can it be that man, who is but a worm of the earth, has not courage to humble himself in presence of the divine Majesty so deeply humbled?" (Serm. 1, in Epiph.)

See him, even while he governs with sovereign authority and infinite wisdom all creatures in heaven and earth, see him in the arms of his Mother permitting her to move him, place him, handle him as she thinks best; and this, that he may persuade us to allow ourselves to be guided without resistance by our superiors, and by his providence, in all things whether agreeable or not, and to reprove our want of submission. Behold the instructions which this heavenly Doctor gives us in the crib! Behold what he teaches us!

It now remains for you who wish to pass for his disciples, to be so in reality, and, renouncing the false opinions of corrupt nature, to make open profession of believing his doctrine and putting it in practice. There is no imposture to be feared in following Truth, no dishonor in imitating the Son of God; on the contrary, we can do nothing which will be more useful and glorious to us; and certainly we cannot depart from the way of truth

without entering into that of deceit, nor can we leave wisdom without falling into folly.

2. Contempt of the World.

What we are about to remark will confirm what we have just said. It is a strange thing to see the extreme contempt which our Lord expressed for all earthly grandeur, and how at his first entrance into the world, at the first step he takes, he tramples under foot all that men esteem and admire, honors, riches, reputation, and pleasures, teaching us by this example how we are deceived in our judgment of the value of these things, and how rather we should regard them.

The star of the Magi gives us great light on this subject. St. Matthew relates how this miraculous star appearing to the princes in their own country, caused them to start forth and led them to Judea and to Jerusalem ; how they inquired boldly where the King of the Jews was born ; how the star was eclipsed while they remained in Jerusalem, and when they were about departing from that city, reappeared, guided them to Bethlehem, and stopped over the stable where the child was. How many mysteries and excellent instructions this narrative contains for us !

First, the star, that is to say the light and the guides that God gives us to direct us in the path of our salvation and bring us to the perfection to which he calls us, should cause us to leave our country, in other words ourselves, and go to Jesus Christ. "The star went before them until it came and stood over where the child was." (Matt. ii. 9.) It guided them so far, and did not pass beyond. Even so all right direction and all good guides lead always to Jesus Christ; they teach, they incite, they continually encourage and persuade us to go to him, to love him, to think of him, to unite ourselves to him, to imitate him as closely as the condition of each one of us will permit, and to make this the foundation and main part of all our devotions; because he is our Saviour, our Redeemer our Last End and our road to reach it, our beatitude and our means of attaining it, and finally our all for our salvation.

The star then guided the Magi to Jesus Christ. But in what state, and in what place? To Jesus Christ a child. And where? To Jesus Christ not radiant on a throne of glory, but hidden in a stable and couched in a manger, in a state of extreme poverty and humility, to teach us that God's true lights

lead to the infancy of our Lord, to the simplicity, docility, submission, faith and innocence of children ; and to make us understand that all our lights, our knowledge, our science, our devotions, and our good direction, should lead to Jesus Christ, poor, humiliated and scorned, that we may esteem, adore, and honor him in that condition which he has assumed for us, and then imitate him.

It was there that the star guided the Magi, and not elsewhere ; it even obscured itself above the rich and proud city of Jerusalem. It is there the Magi, that is the wise, go fearlessly, not repulsed by this poor and abject exterior. But why ?

Because they know that the present life is a life of faith and consequently a life hidden, rather than plainly manifested. The shepherds were told by the angel in precise words that they should find "the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger" (Luke ii. 12), to signify to us that in this world we see our Lord and his mysteries through a veil, not openly, face to face.

Secondly, because they know that this life is a life of merit, and that we must gain our beatitude as a reward, and therefore we must labor ; for there is no reward without merit,

and no merit without labor. We must labor, that is we must exercise acts of virtue, of poverty, of humility, of submission, and others of which our Lord has given us an example.

Finally, because they understand that man is completely ruined in soul and body by sin, and that all that is in him is, owing to the vicious inclination of his corrupt nature, either the concupisence of the flesh for pleasures, or the concupisence of the eyes for riches, or the pride of life for honors, as is declared by St. John (1 Jno. ii. 16); it is impossible for man to become virtuous unless he is changed, neither can he be made capable of the happiness which God prepares for him if he does not correct his vices.

But how shall he correct them? By their opposites. It is a general principle of medicine that diseases cannot be cured except by remedies opposed to them; reason and experience demonstrate this truth; we never see like destroy its like; heat does not banish heat; cold is not chased away by cold, but clings to it as its friend, and by the union of the same natures increases it; it is cold which, by the difference and hostility of its nature, extinguishes heat, and heat by the same law of opposition drives away cold.

Thus we must not expect that our proud and ambitious nature will ever be cured by glory, dignity, and praise, which serve as food for pride and ambition; but only by humiliations and abasements, which are the contraries of those passions. Our irregular affection for riches will not be corrected by possessing them, but by poverty as the right salve for the wound. Our inclination for pleasures will be nourished and increased by the enjoyment of them, and can be destroyed only by contrarieties and sufferings. You are too fond of creatures; it will not be their conversation and attention that will deliver you from this defect, but rather their neglect and contempt. Such, then, are the medicines for our diseases, and without using them we cannot be healed.

Even when human nature has not been spoiled and corrupted by sin, as in the Blessed Virgin; and when it has been but very slightly, as in St. John the Baptist; and when it has suffered to the degree that is ordinarily witnessed in men, though afterward restored miraculously, and receiving a most powerful grace which renders it invulnerable to mortal sin, as in the apostles, it must still be preserved, nourished, and strengthened by these

same medicines—so true it is that our evils and vices must be treated and cured in one manner, and that no other will be efficacious.

Our Lord who had no need for himself of these remedies, his nature being infinitely holy and absolutely impeccable, and who came to sanctify our nature, approved them, esteemed them, loved them, sought and made use of them, in order to teach us that they are the true and only ones which we must employ to recover spiritual health. He also made use of them to purify them, to sanctify and deify them in his person, and thus to sweeten for us their bitterness and render it easier for us to use them.

This is why the kings, the magi, the wise, and all men, should go to the stable and the crib to learn the method of their cure; and those whose condition does not permit them to leave their honors and riches to imitate our Lord, should know that they must at least renounce their affection for them; let them listen to the warning which David, a great king, gives them in these words: "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them." (Is. lxi. 11.) The same warning applies to honors and pleasures.

But as, in consequence of the weakness of

our nature and the powerful attraction of sensible things, it is very difficult to keep our hearts detached from them, and very unusual to be surrounded by worldly glory without being a little vainglorious, to be among vanities without being vain, among pleasures without taking pleasure in them, to possess riches without in some degree loving them—in short, to be truly poor in spirit, we ought to consider it a great grace and a singular blessing from God when he takes from us such occasions of falling and places us, as regards the things of this world, in a state where our feeble virtue is not in such danger and can be more easily sustained and strengthened.

Therefore, let us go with the magi, following the star of our Lord's example; let us boldly enter Jerusalem and ask where the King of the Jews is born, without minding what the world will say about us; let us with head erect enter the stable, let us adore the Child in the crib without being repulsed by its mean exterior; on the contrary, let us, like those wise men, count it our greatest wisdom and our highest prudence to recognize and adore the Divinity in that poverty and lowliness, seeing in the poverty our treasures, in the lowliness our exaltation, and in the opprobrium our glory.

Let us, after the model which our Lord gives us, scorn this inferior and visible world where we are to abide but for a little time, and where things are but shadows; and let us unceasingly aspire to the superior and invisible world which will be our eternal dwelling, and where true riches, true honors, and true pleasures await us.

Let us constantly mistrust this world as a deceiver, and no matter what it presents for our enjoyment let us suspect it as we would the offerings and gifts of an enemy. St. Ambrose says (Lib. de Virgin.) that as poison is always disguised with honey or sugar, otherwise it would not be taken, so vices would not tempt us if they showed themselves in their natural ugliness and revealed the evils that follow them; the world and the flesh could not deceive us—the one with its vanities, the other with its pleasures—if they did not disguise themselves and hide their consequences.

3. Mortification, exterior and interior.

As an example of exterior mortification, we see our Lord born in the darkest hour of the night and in the severest month of the winter; on the eighth day spilling his blood from a most sensitive wound, the apprehension of

which at so tender an age and in so delicate a body, injured him as much as the incision caused him pain; then suffering excessively the greatest inconveniences in a strange country; whence he says by his prophet: "*In laboribus a juventute mea.*" (Ps. lxxxvii. 16.) "I am poor, and in labors from my youth."

For interior mortification, our Lord was circumcised before he received the sacred name of Jesus, which means Saviour, to teach us that the circumcision of the spirit which consists in the retrenchment of thoughts, desires, affections, words, and all other superfluous things, is necessary to receive the effects of the name of Jesus, which are grace, peace, joy, salvation, and perfection.

Oh! how important, if we would belong to Jesus in this world and in the other; is this circumcision of the spirit of which that of the body was only the figure! It must necessarily be effected in you if you wish to be saved, and to be sprinkled with the blood that Jesus Christ shed for men in this mystery. This is why we are told: "*Circumcidimini Domino.*" (Jer. iv. 4.) "Be circumcised to the Lord." Practice circumcision in your interior where God dwells, as in his temple, and where he should be honored; and be careful, if you

would bear his mark, as he is not a body but a spirit, to retrench the uncleanness of your heart and the foolishness of your spirit.

Thus St. Paul says: "We are the circumcision." "*Nos sumus circumcisio.*" (Philipp. iii. 3.) We are circumcised as well as the Jews; but while the Jews, in their gross and carnal law, were circumcised only according to the flesh, we, in our law, which is spiritual and perfect, are circumcised in a more excellent and noble manner—in the spirit. And addressing all true Christians in the persons of those who were at Colossæ, he says: "You are circumcised with circumcision not made by hand in the despoiling of the body of the flesh, but in the circumcision of Christ." (Coloss. ii. 11.)

"Thy head is like Carmel," (Cant. vii. 5) says the divine Spouse to all souls who are, or who desire to be his spouses; "thy head should be like the mountain of Carmel," which signifies, according to the interpretation of St. Jerome, the science of circumcision. Your first and principal exercise should be to practice well the circumcision of the spirit. Jesus will not be given to you unless you are circumcised; he gives himself only after circumcision, but then he gives himself in reality.

Undertake, then, this spiritual circumcision, with a resolution gently strong and constant, retrenching from your interior and exterior, cutting down your affections, your desires, your words, your clothes, your table, your furniture, your amusements—in a word, all those superfluities which the doctrine of the Gospel cannot endure, nor the eye of faith behold unpained after having seen our Lord in the stable, in Egypt, in Nazareth, and on the cross.

4. Esteem and love of the hidden life.

Retreat, silence, and prayer have been singularly prominent in these mysteries; and by that secret and retired life, by that life of silence and prayer which our Lord led for so long a time and almost always, he has clearly shown us how much he prized and loved it, and how after his example we ought to hold it in high esteem and practice it constantly.

Assuredly it is in solitude, in silence, in separation from creatures and in communion with God, who is wisdom, purity, and sanctity itself, that we will become wise, pure, and holy; while in intercourse with men we will continue to be only like men, and frequently like something lower than men. Converse

with men usually distracts, weakens, dissipates, embarrasses, and stains the soul; but converse with God produces in it quite contrary effects.

As a means of enkindling our love for this secret and hidden life we must reflect how the Divine Word dwelt for an eternity hidden in the bosom of his Father without producing himself exteriorly; and when with his Father and the Holy Ghost he had accomplished the work of creation, he still remained, for four thousand years shut up and concealed without manifesting himself; and when he did manifest himself and appeared in person to the eyes of men, it was under the cloak of our nature, which disguised him so completely that he was taken for another. Still more, though he came to teach, he passed thirty years without saying a word save on one single occasion, and that at an age when men would be unlikely to pay much heed to his instructions; and when at last he was pleased to teach men and converse with them, he was always a hidden and an unknown God. (Is. xlv. 15.)

It is remarkable that our Lord, the Word of God, the Incarnate wisdom and the Doctor of men, who could have told us so many beautiful and good things, and who could not have told us a single bad one, lived thirty years without

telling us anything excepting once by the way as it were; moreover, that God willed that all his words and actions during that long period, which undoubtedly were most excellent, should be almost entirely unknown to us; it teaches us how much our Lord loved silence and separation from creatures, and how we should love the same silence and separation.

There is nothing which consists less in words than Christianity; it is formed entirely of effects. "The kingdom of God is not in speech, but in power," says the Apostle. (1 Cor. iv. 20.) And this is evident from the manner of preaching followed by our Lord and his apostles; it was very simple and very popular. Whence St. Paul, the greatest preacher of the Church, writing to the Corinthians who prided themselves upon their fine language, tells them: "When I came to you I came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ. For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling; and my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power." (1 Cor. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.)

Among the Gentiles speech was a power; the eloquence of Demosthenes and Cicero produced marvelous effects in their republics. But before God, and among true Christians, works have the greatest weight; works are praised or blamed, are rewarded or punished, according to their merit; thus our Lord says that on the day of judgment "he will render to every man according to his works." (Matt. xvi. 27.)

It is in the hidden life, the life of silence and prayer, that we will grow with our Lord, of whom St. Luke says, that he "advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men." (Luke ii. 52.) The characteristic of the just is to grow, to advance constantly from good to better without stopping. David says the just "shall go from virtue to virtue" (Ps. lxxxiii. 8), they will make each day new progress on the road of their salvation. David's son compares them to the light which appearing at morning in the horizon, goes on increasing continually until it reaches its perfection at mid-day. (Prov. iv. 18.) The wicked, on the contrary, remain always in the same place, as David well expressed when he said: "The wicked walk round about." (Ps. xi. 9.) The impious, that is those who make profession of

piety but practice it badly, walk round about like animals that turn wheels, and after having made five hundred turns and getting tired during the whole day, are at night just where they began in the morning ; these unfortunate Christians after many turns and circles of their practices of devotion, of their communions, their prayers, etc., during the course of several years, find themselves at the same degree of humility, of patience, of obedience, and of virtue, as they were at first.

But the just, after the example of our Lord, who is their great pattern, advance constantly. At the same time we must remember, with the holy Fathers, that our Lord's advancement in wisdom and grace was only exterior and in the eyes of men, who saw every day new effects of increased wisdom and stronger grace, and not interior and in the depths of his being, where his wisdom, his grace, and his other perfections could not receive any increase ; and he was in that, as in many other things like the sun, which possesses as much light and heat when it rises in the morning as at noon, though we say that in proportion as it shines higher and higher above our heads it increases in light and heat, not in itself, but in regard to us, by bestow-

ing upon us a more abundant measure of these effects. Still we may say, with St. Thomas and the theologians, that our Lord really advanced every day in the experimental knowledge of things, as well as in age.

The just, imitating our Lord, grow in wisdom, in grace, and in virtue, not only by producing, as he did, the exterior effects, but by acquiring in their souls and contracting the habits of wisdom, grace, and virtue.

In order now to know how and in what way the just advance, I say that it is just as our bodies advance or grow. We sometimes see a child of whom we remark: "There is a child that is growing finely." Why? Because his body grows larger visibly, his members become stronger and more robust every day. In the same way the just grow and advance when they become greater in thoughts, in affections, and in designs for God; when they have more strength to bear adversities and persecutions, and more courage to resist sin and practice virtue.

They grow when they watch over their exterior to regulate it well, and still more over their interior to have a firmer faith, a more filial hope, a more ardent charity, a more profound humility, a more constant patience, a

more submissive obedience, a more attentive spirit of prayer, and purer intentions.

They grow when they labor to destroy the old man that dwells in the members of their bodies and in the faculties of their souls, and to make the new man live in them. "Stripping yourselves," says St. Paul, "of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new." (Col. iii. 9.)

For this the just must watch over and do violence to themselves; otherwise it is not possible to reform corrupt nature. The old man will never willingly depart to give place to the new; he must be chased out by violence; whence were written these celebrated words: "You will advance in virtue only in proportion to the violence you do yourself." (De Imit. Christi, L. I., c. xxv. 11.) The efforts you make and the victories you gain over yourself, will be the rule and measure of your advancement.

He who desires to advance and to destroy a vice must understand a most important and absolutely necessary thing, namely, that he must be attentive to himself and watch over his actions. Without this attention and vigilance, his nature, prone to that vice, will never correct itself, because it will infallibly follow

its inclination if not restrained, as we see in all natural things. Do not expect a river to leave its bed and change its course; of itself it will always follow its own current. Our nature will do the same in regard to all its inclinations and habits if it is not prevented; and this can be done only by vigilance and attention to ourselves.

Therefore, rest all the hope of your advancement, after the assistance of God, first on watching over your actions to restrain your nature in its bad inclinations; and then on the violence which you must do yourself in order to urge it to good. Thus you will grow; in any other way you will remain at the same point entire years with all your exercises of devotion, and never pass beyond.

Let us then grow with our Lord in his growth, drawing him into us to help us in this plan of spiritual advancement. "We may in all things grow up in him," says St. Paul. (Ephes. iv. 15.) Let us grow up in him according to all the dimensions of virtue. See how the flowers, the trees, the animals constantly grow until they reach the highest degree of their perfection. You yourself grow every day as regards your body which contin-

ually increases in height, size, and strength, until it attains its full natural proportions.

Seeing this, would it not be a great shame for you if your soul, that is incomparably nobler than your body, did not grow in like manner, but should remain always in the same state of littleness and childhood. If your body should be as small and have as diminutive members at the age of thirty years as when you were but three months old and were still wrapped in swaddling clothes, you would feel extreme confusion to be thus formed and to see yourself a child in size when you should be a man. You would certainly be considered a monstrosity, and people would pay money to look at you. Now, what is not the misfortune of your body is the misfortune of your soul when it does not grow in virtue, but ever remains stunted, puny, and weak in the practice of virtue and in the government of your passions. Therefore, be terrified at seeing in yourself this monstrous disposition, endeavor to cast it off and to grow up from it.

IV.—MEDITATIONS.

These should be drawn from the mysteries of the season. You may take them from the books that suit you best, or may derive them

from what we have said, dwelling chiefly upon the affections that attract you most, and upon the virtues most necessary to you.

V.—READING.

See what has been said under this heading in the last chapter.

VI.—ASPIRATORY VERSES.

"If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha," (1 Cor. xvi. 22)—cursed because our Lord is come and is made man for him!

"My soul hath fainted after thy salvation; and in thy Word I have very much hoped." (Ps. cxviii. 81.) My soul hath fainted from the strength of its love for thy incarnate Son whom thou hast sent here below to save us, and I have steadfastly placed in him all my hopes.

"Thy eyes shall see thy teacher, and thy ears shall hear the word of one admonishing thee behind thy back: 'This is the way, walk ye in it, and go not aside, neither to the right hand, nor to the left." (Is. xxx. 20, 21.) Thy eyes shall see thy Preceptor and thy Master in the crib as in his pulpit, and thy ears shall hear him telling thee: "Behold

the right way, walk in it; by it you must reach your salvation and your perfection; turn neither to the right nor the left, if you would not be lost.

"Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." (Is. lx. 1.) Arise, Jerusalem, above the earth and above low and human views; open thy eyes to the light that is sent thee; behold the day appears and the Sun of Justice will illumine thee; behold the glory of the Lord shown to thee in the stable.

"You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) You ought to be dead, and to lead a life retired and hidden in God, after the pattern of that which Christ led.

CHAPTER V.

PRACTICE OF UNION WITH OUR LORD FOR THE SEASON OF LENT.

I.—THE SUBJECT.

As the holy season of Lent is especially consecrated to the remembrance of the sufferings and death which our Lord was pleased to endure for us, the practice will be to inhale him and draw him into us in his suffering and dying states, to unite ourselves closely with him in the dispositions of those states, and to enter into the spirit of his cross if we desire to share its fruits and merits.

I have already said that if we seriously desire to be saved, our greatest care and the object of all our devotions should be to unite ourselves to our Lord in his mysteries, and in everything. I say it again, and it is most certain, because our salvation, our perfection, all the grace, all the glory, and generally all the blessings that we can ever possess in this life and in the other, depend upon this union; for, as the holy Precursor says: "Of his fullness we have all received, and grace for grace."

(Jno. i. 16.) We have all drawn from his source, and all our graces are only drops and little rivulets which flow to us from the streams that were given him without measure for himself and for us.

Now, if we ought to unite ourselves with our Lord in all his mysteries, I add here that it is in the mystery of his passion and death that we ought chiefly to do so, and that it is with him suffering and dying that we should form our principal and closest ties. In the same manner as our body, while it is united in all its members to our soul as the principle of its life, is in a more intimate manner in the nobler parts, and especially in the heart; whence Aristotle says that the heart is the part of the body which receives life first and loses it last. Even so we should be united to our Lord in all his mysteries, and in a most especial manner in that of his cross, because it is in his cross and by his cross that he has planned and decreed our predestination, that he has obtained our conversion, that he has secured our justification, that he has paid our debts, merited for us all the gifts of grace and glory we shall ever receive, and negotiated and concluded the whole business of our salvation. This is why our salvation and our

happiness are attached to our union with him in this mystery.

To be predestined and saved it is necessary to be united with our Lord not only when he has the power and the will to predestine and save, but when he actually does predestine and save, offices which he properly and only executed on the cross; for, as theologians, supported by the Sacred Writings, teach, while all our Lord's acts, even the least, were of an infinite excellence on account of the infinite dignity of his person, they were not infinitely meritorious to acquire for men the blessings of grace and glory, nor infinitely satisfactory to discharge their debts towards the Divine Justice, until they had been sprinkled with his blood and consummated by his death, to which God his Father had attached the salvation of the human race as to the perfection and crowning of the whole great work. (Cs. Becan. Part iii., c. 14.)

Isaiah says: "If he shall lay down his life for sin, he shall see a long-lived seed, and the will of the Lord shall be prosperous in his hand." (Is. liii. 10.) If he gives his life for the remission of sin, he shall see a long line of the just, and God's design to save men shall be executed by his hands nailed to the cross.

"We have redemption through his blood," says St. Paul. (Eph. i. 7.) We are purchased with the price of his blood. And St. John declares: "Jesus Christ loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Apoc. i. 5.) The whole Church militant proclaims the same truth when she says in the preface of the Mass of the Holy Cross: "Who didst effect the salvation of mankind on the wood of the Cross." And the Church triumphant sings to our Lord, according to the narrative of St. John: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in thy blood." (Apoc. v. 9.) Thou wast put to death, and, by the merit of thy death and of thy blood, thou hast purchased us and acquired for us the eternal blessings we now enjoy.

God might have pardoned men their sins in a thousand other ways, but he preferred the way of the Cross, as being to him and even to his Son incomparably more honorable, and to us more useful. Inasmuch as God had been dishonored and offended by the sins of men it was necessary that his honor should be restored and his justice satisfied. This undoubtedly was accomplished more fully and with an infinitely greater advantage by the sufferings and death of his Son, than if he

had refused to accept anything, or had demanded the death of criminal men or the destruction of innocent angels, because there is nothing which as a reparation could compare with the death of a God; still more, because the Son of God in dying surmounted forever his enemies, sin and the devil, and triumphed over them gloriously, and by his victory made us his booty and his conquest and acquired us to himself, and gave us many more reasons to honor him, to thank him, and to love him, than if he had not suffered for us.

The blessings which we derive from our Lord's death are infinite, because by it he has delivered us from the servitude of sin and given us our liberty; he has trampled the devil under his feet, so that, unless we are willing, he can no longer injure us; he has closed the gates of hell and opened to us those of paradise; and he has shown his great regard for us and the perfect love he bears us, by buying us so dearly and giving infinitely more than was necessary, since he might have ransomed us with a single glance of his eye or one word from his lips. A man who gives a hundred thousand dollars for something which he might buy for one cent, shows in the strongest man-

ner his high estimate of it, his deep affection for it, and his violent desire to possess it.

Therefore we must infer that the mystery of the Cross is the mystery of predestination, of justification, of salvation, and of the entire happiness of mankind; it is there, in it, that our Lord became truly ours and made us his; it is in it that he espoused the Church, "which he hath purchased with his own blood," as St. Paul declares. (Acts xx. 28.) There he made himself our Head and us his members; there he pours upon us his salutary influences and exercises, in a most admirable manner, his functions as Chief, and desires that we should acquit ourselves of the submission and other duties that followers owe their Chief.

When St. Paul speaks of the body of the Church, and of our Lord's union with the faithful as the Head with the members, (Rom. vi. 5; Gal. ii. 19; Coloss. i. 24.) he almost always makes mention of the Cross and death of our Lord as the means and bond of this union, just as our members are united with the head by the nerves and muscles. From this we should conclude that we ought to exert ourselves to our utmost to unite ourselves with our Lord, especially in this mystery of his passion, and that it should be the part of our

devotions to which we should apply ourselves more than to all the rest.

Let us imitate St. Paul, who, writing to the Corinthians, said: "I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) To this I reduced all my science. And let us copy St. Bernard, who, speaking of our Lord's death and passion, renders this testimony of himself: "I believed that true wisdom consisted in meditation on the sufferings and death of my Saviour; I chose it as the most efficacious means to acquire virtues and attain perfection; I relied upon it for the completion of my knowledge, for the riches of my salvation, and for the abundance of my merits. Behold my highest philosophy, to know Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified." (Serm. 43, in Cant.)

In order to practice this most important exercise and unite yourself with our Lord crucified, you must perform carefully and with great earnestness what we shall now direct; taking for the food of your understanding and the occupation of your will, not the whole together, but sometimes one thing and sometimes another, according as you feel disposed, dwelling upon it until it makes an impression

on your soul, or you find it powerless to move you, when you may pass to another point that may produce more effect upon you.

II.—THE AFFECTIONS.

Taking it for granted that the soul has a lively faith and a perfect conviction that he who was fastened to the Cross for us is the true and only Son of God, which faith and conviction must be the foundation and basis of all the rest, the first affection will be :

1. Admiration.

As what is great, new, and strange, excites admiration and astonishment in the beholder, and in the same proportion in which it is great, new, and strange, so we cannot doubt that the first affection that should touch our hearts at this holy time should be extreme admiration and profound astonishment at seeing God fastened to a gibbet and dying upon it. God fastened to a gibbet! God dying! What an object! What a spectacle! Neither eternity nor time has ever seen, or will ever see, anything like it, or that approaches a resemblance to it. Truly here we should cry out with the Prophet : " Who hath

ever heard such a thing? and who hath seen the like to this?" (Is. lxvi. 8.)

The friends of Job seeing that holy man fallen from a high and happy position into an abyss of misery, and seated upon a dunghill scraping with a piece of pottery the matter which flowed from the sores on his body, were so terrified that for seven days they were quite out of their senses and powerless to address him a single word. Yet he was only a man, and his afflictions were but figures and shadows of those of the Son of God.

Therefore what should be our astonishment, and with what awe should we not be filled at the sight of the Creator of heaven and earth, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the God of glory, the Infinite Majesty and Holiness itself, taken as a criminal, treated as a malefactor, cruelly cut with whips at a pillar, and made frightful with his own blood, crowned with sharp thorns, struck, his face spat upon, the hair plucked from his head and his beard torn, all imaginable outrages heaped on him, and then dying upon an infamous cross between two thieves! God suffering such indignities and dying in such a manner! Is it not enough to cause our hearts to faint and our souls to sink to nothingness?

The prophet Daniel having seen only in the person of an angel a figure of this truth, and heard from his lips some words which gave him a knowledge of it, says of himself: "There remained no strength in me, and the appearance of my countenance was changed in me, and I fainted away and retained no strength. And I heard the voice of his words; and when I heard I lay in a consternation upon my face, and my face was close to the ground." (Dan. x. 8, 9.) If the figure made so powerful an impression upon a man of the Old Law, what may not, and what ought not the reality to effect upon us in the New Law?

To speak with all reason, there is nothing in the passion and death of the Son of God, the consideration of which is not capable of ravishing our souls, and of plunging and engulfing them in an abyss of astonishment, because all in this mystery is of unprecedented grandeur; the dignity of the Person who suffers is infinite; the torments of body and soul which he endures are innumerable and excessive; the insignificance and the lack of merit of those for whom he suffers is extreme, and the love with which he suffers

is boundless. If we do not admire these wonders, what shall we admire?

2. Compassion.

It would be terrible for us to have no compassion for our Lord's woes, since the elements and inanimate things had so much; we must indeed be heartless if we can look upon his horrible sufferings without pity.

The afflictions of an amiable and beloved person move us to compassion and excite our pity. If we should see a young prince, eighteen or twenty years of age, of an extremely delicate and sensitive constitution, beautiful as the day, faultlessly gentle and gracious, liberal, magnanimous, who had never injured any one, but had ever done good to all, and who was innocent of any crime, extended upon a wheel and an executioner breaking his arms and legs, would it be possible, even if our heart were like a rock, to witness such a sight without experiencing deep emotions and shedding an abundance of tears? Most men would not even have the courage to be present at so painful an execution and to behold so lamentable an object. Now, all these qualities are found in unequaled perfection in the person of our

Lord, whose sufferings consequently ought to touch us far more and to make incomparably deeper impressions upon our souls.

Let us represent to ourselves this only Son of God, this Sovereign Monarch of the universe, in the Garden praying under circumstances so pitiful that the consideration of them must needs move the hardest hearts. Let us see him prostrate with his face to the earth before his Father angered against us; let us hear the words he utters in the extremity of his weariness and distress: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death!" And then let us behold issuing from his whole body that bloody sweat which makes him an object of extreme commiseration, and obliges his Father to send one of his angels to comfort him.

Or let us contemplate him bound, naked, to a column, and exposed to the gaze of a crowd of insolent spectators; executioners enraged and animated by the devils, discharge furiously and with all their might a shower of blows upon that virginal flesh and that most delicate body, sparing neither the limbs, nor any part which they do not bruise to blood, and upon which they do not leave horrible marks of their cruelty and diabolic rage.

Or again, let us look upon him hanging

from a gibbet between two thieves, rendering up his soul in a depth of opprobrium, of anguish, and of every species of suffering; and as the crown of all, let us remember that we are the cause of his sufferings, that he endures them for our sakes, and that it is his perfect love for us which has brought him to this extremity.

Is it possible that not being able to see a man broken upon the wheel, nor even, which is much less, a beast suffer and moan, without being moved to pity, we can look tearlessly and without emotion upon the inexplicable sufferings of our Lord, sufferings which we have caused him? The sight is so touching that the prophet Isaiah says it causes even the angels to weep. "Behold they that see shall cry without, the angels of peace shall weep bitterly." (Is. xxxiii. 7.) Behold the angels who enjoy perfect peace in their beatitude, are troubled, if we may so say, and though far removed from tears by the happiness of their condition, shed them in torrents when they contemplate the Son of God dishonored, bathed in blood, torn, and outraged to the degree that he was throughout the course of his passion; that is, they would melt into tears if they were capable of them and if their

nature were like ours, although they are not, as we are, the subject and cause of our Lord's sufferings.

It is true that the love the angels have for our Lord contributes much to their compassion; for if one loves, one has pity for the woes of the person beloved, pity which increases in proportion to the love. Thus a mother cannot see her only son whom she greatly loves, suffer even a pain in the end of his finger without sharing that pain; and if his affliction is more serious, she feels her whole soul moved and fainting; she sighs, she weeps, she laments, she is inconsolable, she looks at her dear son with pitying eyes, she mourns over him with bitter words, and she comforts him as best she can—all this she would not do if she did not love him.

Alas! if we loved our Lord nearly as much as we ought we would not be so indifferent and insensible to his afflictions and sorrows, but they would certainly pierce our hearts, while now we see representations and hear descriptions of them and are not touched ever so slightly, because we do not love him.

Let us begin to love him, and compassion for his excessive woes which he suffers through us and for us, will soon follow, and will

enable us to fulfill the famous prophecy of Zachariah through whom our Lord says: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for me as one mourneth for an only son." (Zach. xii. 10.) They shall look upon me fastened to the Cross, and considering who I am and what I suffer, from whom and for whom, that it is they themselves who have brought me to this state, and that I submit to it for their salvation, they will break forth into great lamentations and will weep as bitterly as a mother who has lost her only son.

3. Regret for Sin.

It will be very easy as a consequence of our compassion and the reasons we have considered in order to excite ourselves to it, to conceive an extreme regret and to have a true contrition for our sins.

We are the cause of all the woes and torments which our Lord suffered; our sins produced his pains, and apart from them he would not have endured his passion and death. The Prophet tells us: "He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins." (Is. liii. 5.) He was stricken for our iniquities; for our crimes he was seized, buf-

feted, scourged, torn with rods, crowned with thorns, and crucified. Is this not sufficient, and more than sufficient, to transpierce our hearts with sorrow and to chill our souls with regret for having sinned?

We have caused the Son of God to suffer, to be scourged, buffeted, crucified. We are the reason why the Infinite Majesty before whom the highest Cherubim and Seraphim prostrate themselves in adoration, has been dishonored, why Sanctity itself has been counted among criminals, Innocence condemned, Wisdom taken for folly, and the Living God reduced to that extremity which terrified the whole universe, of dying ignominiously and cruelly on a gibbet between two thieves.

Alas! if on our account and for some fault committed by us the meanest slave should be whipped, or have his hand cut off by an executioner, or even if through carelessness we should break a dog's leg and should hear him howl, it would be impossible for us not to be sorry, and not to regret the harm we had done.

This is why the afflicted prophet Jeremiah thinking of this incomparable subject for regret, exclaims in his Lamentations: "Let tears run down like a torrent day and night;

give thyself no rest, and let not the apple of thy eye cease." (Lam. ii. 18.) My heart, be filled with sadness and weariness, break with sorrow! And you, my eyes, open to torrents of tears which shall never cease, that you may regret and mourn for my sins that have caused the sufferings and death of the Son of God! Even the Jews, who were the immediate cause of our Lord's death, and who were present at it with the pagan officers of justice, returning from Calvary beat their breasts, touched with sadness and repentance for the evil deed they had just accomplished. (Luke xxiii. 48.)

But, to enter still further and more perfectly into the spirit of regret for our sins, we ought for several consecutive days during this season of Lent, which is properly the season for penitence, to unite ourselves with particular care to our Lord sorrowing and afflicted for our sins, and to inhale him and draw him into us in this disposition.

In order to understand this well we must know that among the most remarkable acts that our Lord performed for our salvation, one was the extreme affection with which he gave himself up to obtain the pardon of our sins and to reconcile us with his Father. We had

all offended God; we were all loaded with crimes; and for this the Divine Justice had condemned us to eternal flames without hope of ever being able to enter paradise. God regarded us as his enemies upon whom he was to exercise his vengeance forever, when his Son through a goodness and love for which we can never throughout all eternity be sufficiently thankful, undertook to restore us to friendship with his Father, to induce that Father to forget his injuries and pardon us our offences, so that he might receive us again into his favor, and from the enemies we were make of us his children and open to us his paradise instead of the hell we had merited. St. Paul says: "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." (Rom. v. 10.) Though we were enemies of God, we have been happily reconciled to him and restored to his favor by the mediation of his Son and the merits of his death. And again: "God hath reconciled us to himself by Christ. God indeed was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their sins." (2 Cor. v. 18, 19.) God has restored us to his friendship by means of Christ, in whom he worked this great undertaking of

the reconciliation of mankind with himself and of the forgiveness of their sins.

For this object our Lord did four things: first, he took our sins upon himself; second, he exercised deep sorrow and perfect contrition for them; third, he begged God, his Father, to forgive them; and fourth, he performed a terrible penance for them.

As regards the first of these things, it is most certain and an article of our faith that the Son of God took our sins upon himself. Isaiah says: "Surely he hath borne our iniquities and carried our sorrows. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He hath borne the sins of many." (Is. liii. 4, 6, 12.) He has in reality, not merely in appearance, taken upon himself our weaknesses, our sorrows, and our miseries; he has charged himself with our faults, our crimes, all that makes us sinners and consequently displeasing to his Father, who has laid on him our iniquities in order to relieve us of them.

As a figure of this the prophet Zachariah saw the high-priest Jesus, son of Josedech, who represented our Lord, according to the explanation of Tertullian, Origen, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and several other Fathers, covered with a miserable robe full of stains

and clothed in a tattered and filthy garment. "The Lord showed me Jesus, the high-priest; and Jesus was clothed with filthy garments." (Zach. iii. 1, 3—2 cf. Cornel. a Lap. Ibid.) This filthy robe covered with stains and dirt, signifies our sins that Christ took upon himself. "*Delicta mea*," says St. Jerome; "*appellantur vestimenta sordida.*" And St. Ambrose, "*Stabat Jesus et habebat vestimenta sordida; mea enim peccata portabat.*" (Hieron. Ib., Ambr. in Ps. cxviii.) That soiled garment that Jesus had on his shoulders, was my sins with which he charged himself. And the Prince of the Apostles says the same thing: "*Peccata nostra ipse pertulit in corpore suo super lignum.*" "Who his ownself bore our sins in his body upon the tree." Or, as the Syriac version gives it: "*Bajulavit omnia peccata nostra, eaque sustulit in corpore suo ad crucem.*" (1 Pet. ii. 24.) He took upon himself our sins, that is the punishment due them, and by the torments he suffered in his body and on the cross, he satisfied for us the Divine justice. And when he went to Calvary, bearing his cross, we should see in that cross all our sins which he carried and which weighed him down, and which he was going to wash and efface in the streams of his blood.

That mysterious goat spoken of in the Book of Leviticus (Levit. xvi.), on the head of which the priest placed both his hands while making a public confession of all the sins of the people with which he charged it, and which was then led away into the desert to be torn to pieces by wild beasts and expiate by its blood and death in some manner the sins of the people, was a visible picture of this truth.

For this reason our Lord, in the Psalms, calls our sins his sins, our offences his offences, (Ps. xxi., xxxix., lxviii.,) not in the sense of having committed them, but because he has charged himself with them and made them his own burden; just as a person who has become security for another makes the debts of that other his own, and is the one to whom the creditor applies, forcing him to pay instead of the real debtor.

As to the second point, our Lord's sorrow and contrition for our sins, it is to be remarked that the first obligation of every man who has committed a fault is to regret that fault and repent of it. Therefore, our Lord, who took upon himself all our faults and all our sins, and all the consequences of them, experienced the same sorrow and repentance for them

as if he had himself committed them. "Him, that knew no sin, for us he hath made sin, (2 Cor. v. 21, cf. Corn. a Lap. Ibid.) says St. Paul. Likewise the prophet Isaiah says, according to the Septuagint version: "He bears our sins, and has regret and sorrow for them." (Is. liii. 4.) And St. Ambrose says: "Our Lord having nothing in himself to regret, regretted my sins." (Ambr. in c. 22, Luke.)

Now, this regret and sorrow our Lord had for our sins was a true and continual act of most lively, most intense contrition, a contrition so deep as to have no parallel, and which without a miracle would have caused his death each moment of the day. Assuredly if, as we read, several famous penitents unable to bear their excess of sorrow, died of grief for their sins, we may with much greater reason say that the same thing would have happened to our Lord if he had not by his omnipotence prevented it in order to reserve himself for his last sacrifice.

The reason of this is evident. Sorrow is greater in proportion as the evil that causes it is greater and afflicts a being dearer and more tenderly beloved. Our Lord's sorrow was for sin, which is the greatest of all evils,

the sovereign evil; the sins of men, countless as they are in number, offend the Divine Majesty which he loved with an infinite love and which he knew to be worthy of infinite honor and respect, and are besides injurious to men whom he loved most ardently and earnestly desired to save. Therefore, his sorrow and contrition for our sins exceeded anything that we can conceive; on account of its bitterness and abundance, Jeremiah compared it to the sea: "Great as the sea is thy destruction." (Lam. ii. 13.) Thy contrition.

It was this sorrow that caused the Son of God to weep frequently and bitterly, it was this contrition for our sins that drew rivers of tears from his eyes and sobs from his heart. He says, by Jeremiah: "My eyes have failed with weeping" (Lam. ii. 11); and by David: "My life is wasted with grief, and my years in sighs." (Ps. xxx. 11.)

In the third place, we cannot doubt that our Lord asked pardon for us of God his Father, since Isaiah says: "He hath borne the sins of many and hath prayed for the transgressors." (Is. liii. 12.) And St. Paul: "Who in the days of his flesh with a strong cry and tears offering up prayers and supplications" to God his Father. (Heb. v. 7.)

He prayed for us often during the whole of his life from the moment of his conception to his death, because from that first moment he had a perfect knowledge of all the sins of men, of the dishonor God would receive from them and the misfortunes they would bring on men; this knowledge furnished him a subject of continual regret, of unceasing prayer for pardon for us. And even now in Heaven, seated at the right hand of his Father he still intercedes for us, showing his wounds and recalling his merits. St. Paul says: "He maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 34); and, as St. John says (1 Jno. ii. 1), "he is our advocate, pleading our cause."

But he prayed in an especial manner on the Cross where he said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34); and St. Paul declares that he said it "with a strong cry and tears." (Heb. v. 7.) These words of St. Paul must refer to our Lord's prayer on the Cross, as the Evangelists relate that he died "crying with a loud voice" (Matt. xxvii. 50), and that as he yielded up his spirit he bowed his head (Jno. xix. 30), as if to render his prayer more effectual. An ancient Father tells us that "all the acts of Jesus Christ during his mortal life were as

so many prayers and supplications to God his Father for the sins of the human race, and the blood he shed had a strong voice and a powerful clamor to obtain their pardon, and did truly obtain it." (Primas. Ib.)

Notice his prayer in the Garden of Olives. With what affection, with what earnestness, with what gestures, and in what a posture he prays! How sad and imploring is his prayer! He prays to his Father not alone for himself, but for us; he kneels, bows his head even to the earth, humbles himself as deeply as possible in body and still more in soul; he is seized with an extreme sadness and weariness which are like the pangs of death and causes him to sweat blood. He is in some sort like a poor father, who, seeing his only son, the object of all his affections, condemned to death for a crime, is transported with sorrow for his son's misfortune and guilt; his grief is inexpressible. What does he not do, what does he not say to the king to obtain the son's pardon? With what entreaties, what supplications and pleadings, with what emotions and floods of tears, does he not beg for mercy? Even thus our Lord prayed to his Father for us in the Garden. The prophet Jeremiah says of him: "He shall put his

mouth in the dust, if so there may be hope." (Lam. iii. 29.) He will bow his head to the ground and put his mouth in the dust, to see if in that posture he may find hope.

Fourthly, our Lord, having loaded himself with our sins, not only had sorrow for them and prayed his Father to forgive them, but he performed penance for them during his whole life and especially in his passion and death.

"He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins," says Isaiah. (Is. liii. 5.) He was wounded for our sins, he suffered excruciatingly to obtain the remission of our crimes, he performed for them a most severe penance.

St. Bonaventure says likewise: "He was by nature the son of the house, and through goodness he made himself the servant; and he was not content to take the form of a servant to obey, but he took the form of a wicked servant to be beaten and scourged; and he made himself not only the servant of the servants of God, as his Vicar on earth calls himself, but still more the servant of the servants of the devil, rendering service to the vilest of sinners, in order to expiate our sins by his sufferings and death." (Bonav. de Perf. vit. c. 6.)

St. John Climacus mentions (Jno. Clim. Grad. 5.) some illustrious penitents whose violent regret for their sins, and extreme desire for pardon and penance, enabled them to do things truly most terrible ; but after all, their penances bore no comparison with our Lord's. For what a penance was it not for him, the only Son of God, to be born a little child in a stable in the depth of winter, to be laid in a manger upon straw, and to be deprived of every comfort ! to be circumcised the eighth day and spill his blood with excessive pain and extreme dishonor ! to suffer all that he suffered in his flight into Egypt and his tarrying there ! What a penance was it not for him to lead a hidden and laborious life for thirty years, exercising the trade of a carpenter and gaining his bread by the labor of his hands and the sweat of his brow !

But finally what a penance did he not perform for our sins in his passion and death, when he was taken and bound as a malefactor, cruelly scourged at a pillar, crowned with sharp thorns, mocked, buffeted, and then fastened to a gibbet to die amid inexpressible torments between two thieves !

The prophet Isaiah says : "There is no beauty in him nor comeliness ; and we have

seen him, and there was no sightliness--despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity." (Is. liii. 2, 3.) He was so disfigured and so hideous to look upon on account of the stripes he had received, his wounds, the plucking out of his hair and beard, the blows that had been given him, the spittle with which his face was smeared, the blood, partly flowing, partly congealed, that covered his whole body, that he was unrecognizable ; we saw him in a most contemptible condition, and we took him for the most afflicted of all mankind, a man filled with sorrows, and who well knew from his own experience what it is to suffer. What a penance ! Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, and perfect Innocence, dying, dead upon a gibbet ! What a penance !

Jesus Christ performing penance, and such a penance, for our sins ! Is it not most just that we who have committed them, should have some part in it ?

Represent to yourself our Lord clothed in that miserable robe that Zachariah saw, and loaded with our vanities, our bursts of anger, our intemperances, and all our sins ; he feels unceasingly a deep regret and extreme displeasure for them ; without intermission and

with inconceivable vehemence he implores God his Father to pardon us, and he performs a frightful penance in our behalf.

Seeing our Lord in this state for you, what should be your sentiments? What should you say? What should you do? Should you be insensible and stupid, doing nothing? Or should you not endeavor to imitate him, to experience according to your capacity his feelings, and to participate in the penance he performed for you? If you do otherwise you will be very unfortunate. And what a reason for terror you will have when he shall in his character as your security demand of you all he has paid in discharge of your debts! Rest assured that it is to you he has said: "Except you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 5), and that it is for this that God his Father has appointed him the Judge of mankind.

Therefore, as our Lord being loaded with your sins had his heart filled with sorrow and repentance for you, enter into that afflicted heart, and uniting your heart with it conceive a true sorrow, and produce acts of perfect contrition for all your sins.

If you should see your friend, your brother, or the son of the king, sad and desolate, shed-

ding copious tears for a fault you had committed and that had deserved the penalty of death, would your eyes remain dry, would you be unmoved? Consider now that you owe much more to our Lord, who is afflicted and weeping for your sins.

He has asked pardon of God his Father; ask it also with him. "Mercy prays," says St. Augustine, "misery does not pray. Innocence implores pardon for guilt, guilt utters not a word. He who has not sinned assumes the posture of a suppliant, and the sinner loaded with crimes does not prostrate himself to the earth." (Aug. I. de orat. Dom.) Surely the criminal son of that poor afflicted father of whom we have spoken, and who asked the king to pardon his son, would if he were at liberty follow his father, be sad and afflicted with him, weep with him, pray with him, and do all he could according to his age to help the father obtain his pardon.

In the same manner, in union with our Lord, ask God his Father for the remission of your sins, ask it in his light, not in your own—that is to say, in his perfect knowledge of their multitude and enormity which is quite different from what you think; for, as to the multitude of your sins, if you are aware

of one there are fifty you do not see ; and to understand their enormity, you should know how great God is, because the offence derives its magnitude chiefly from the greatness of the person offended.

Finally, do penance for your sins with our Lord, practising in union with him the painful exercises of Lent, the fasts, the longer prayers, the greater silence, the withdrawal from society and seeking of solitude in order to dwell more with God, the greater watchfulness over yourself, the combat of your passions, and the giving of alms.

And after all this offer to God the sorrow and repentance which our Lord had for your sins, the prayers he addressed to his Father to obtain your pardon, and the long and rude penance he performed to appease him and to make up for your deficiencies in prayer and penance.

Say to him with David : "Look on the face of thy Christ." (Ps. lxxxiii. 10.) Cast thine eyes upon the face of thy Son ; see the sadness of his heart and his regret for my sins ; hearken to the prayers he offered with tears to obtain my pardon. I know I do not deserve that thou shouldst hear me ; but he is infinitely worthy to receive what he asks, because

he asks what he has dearly bought and at a price vastly more than its worth, and because he loves thee with an infinite love, and is by nature sovereignly elevated and of an absolutely infinite excellence. Wherefore the Apostle says that when he prayed to thee for sinners, thou didst render him the respect to hear his prayer: "He was heard for his reverence." (Heb. v. 7.) Consider all he has suffered to move thee to have mercy upon me. In his heart, repentant and stung with remorse for my offences, I am deeply sorry for them; I ask thee pardon through his lips, and I perform my penance in that he was pleased to perform for their expiation.

4. *Hope.*

The Cross is our great hope, and Jesus Christ crucified is our strongest support. This is why the Church sings: "*O crux ave, spes unica.*" I salute thee, O Cross, my only hope! And St. Crysostom calls it "the hope of Christians, the safety of the world, the guide of the blind, the right road of travelers, the riches of the poor, the sword, the shield, the offensive and defensive arms of soldiers, the bulwark of the assailed, and the glorious trophy of the victory which the Son of God

gained over the devil and all our enemies." (Crysost. Or. in Cruc. et Serm. 8 et 22, de Div.)

The reason on which this hope is founded, is the fact that our Lord paid our ransom on the Cross, and paid infinitely more than was necessary to discharge all our debts and remedy all our miseries. If our debts are paid we no longer owe anything; nothing can be demanded of us if the satisfaction of this payment has been truly applied to us. St. Paul says, in this sense, that God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." (Coloss. i. 13.) God has rescued us from the tyrannical power of the prince of darkness, and has placed us in the blessed state and kingdom of his beloved Son who bought us with his blood, the least drop of which is of an infinite value and consequently more than sufficient to efface all our sins, to deliver us from all our miseries, and to acquire for us every blessing.

On this subject, Father Avila wrote to an afflicted person as follows: "We ought to establish our hope in the passion and death of our Lord, and trust ourselves to his merits, banishing from our spirits all uneasiness, and

closing our eyes to all occasions for mistrust; because our merits are as great as is the virtue of his passion and death, since it is ours and he has given it to us, having suffered for us. In this I confide, here I place my salvation; here I take courage and mock at my enemies; here, offering to the Eternal Father his Son, I ask whatsoever I need; here I pay what I owe, and have something left besides; and although my miseries are numerous and excessive, I nevertheless find here a most potent remedy and a subject of joy greater than is that of my grief."

And to another the same Father writes this advice: "Do not forget that our Lord Jesus Christ as our Mediator, stands between the Eternal Father and us, and that for his sake we are beloved and bound to his Father by so close a tie of perfect charity, that nothing could loosen it did not man himself cut it with the blade of a mortal sin. Have you ceased to remember that the blood of Jesus Christ cries for mercy for us, and that it cries so loud that it drowns the noise of our sins and prevents their being heard? Do you not know that if our sins are still in existence, the death of Jesus Christ who died to kill them, must be of little worth since it could

not destroy them? Try to impress this truth deeply upon your mind, that Jesus Christ took upon himself the affair of our redemption and salvation as his own business, and that we are so closely united with him that he and we must be loved or hated together; and as it is not possible that being what he is he should be hated by his Father, so also it is not possible that we should be if we remain united to him by faith and charity. On the contrary, as he is loved and cherished we are also in him and by him, and with reason, because he weighs more in the balance of Divine Justice to make us loved than we do to make him hated. Undoubtedly the Father has more love for his Son than he has hatred for sinners who are converted to him. May Jesus Christ be praised and blessed forever, he who is, and whom we can with a loud voice call our hope; there is nothing in the world that can intimidate and terrify as so much as he can reassure us." Thus says Father Avila.

Of a truth it is easy for a sick man to form a strong hope of his cure when he knows he has a sovereign remedy vastly more powerful than his disease, and that the one who administers it has a great love for him and a

wondrous desire for his recovery. We have all this, and much more, in Jesus Christ.

This is why when you behold him attached to the Cross you ought to gaze upon him with eyes full of trust, and say to him with David: "My mercy, and my refuge; my support, and my deliverer; my protector, and I have hoped in him." (Ps. cxliii. 2.) Behold my mercy and my refuge, my support and my liberator; behold my great confidence. It is upon this Cross, upon this dear crucified One, that I found all my hope.

Say to him again with the same David: "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped. My lots are in thy hands." (Ps. xxx. 2, 16.) Yes, my Lord, in thee I hope, and all my confidence is in thy hands pierced and nailed to the Cross for my salvation.

5. *Dwelling in the wounds of our Lord; and particularly in that of his side.*

The Holy Ghost, speaking in the Canticle of the just soul, says: "My dove in the clefts of the rock." (Cant. ii. 14.) My dove dwells in the clefts of the rock. This rock is Jesus Christ, according to these words of St. Paul: "And the rock was Christ." (1 Cor. x. 4.)

And the clefts are his wounds. St. Bernard, explaining this passage, says: "The dove hides herself there as in a safe place, and looks without danger or fear at the hawk flying around her; the sparrow builds there her nest, and the turtle-dove also, and there hatches and nourishes her little ones."

The just soul takes pleasure in dwelling in the wounds of her Saviour, because they are magnificent palaces, cities of refuge, impregnable fortresses, boxes of precious perfumes, gates of salvation, sources of graces, tribunals of mercy, fountains of life, mines of gold, furnaces of charity and of the charms of benevolence.

And she dwells in them in her thoughts and affections, producing acts of faith in their excellence and necessity for our salvation, in their priceless value and infinite merit; acts of admiration, adoration, gratitude, hope, joy, love of her Saviour who was pleased to receive them for her sake, and prayers to him to apply to her their fruits.

But she makes her most usual and most agreeable dwelling in the wound of his side, because it is the wound of love; since it was received in the heart, for love, after his death, to show that his death and his life and all his

mysteries had love and charity for their principle and their end, proceeding from the love he bears our souls and tending to make him loved by them in return. Still more, it is not only the most loving place, but the most delightful, and the strongest and most secure; so that the just soul says what St. Elzear sent as a message to St. Delphina, his wife: "If you want to find me you must seek me in the wound of our Lord's side, for it is there I dwell."

It is there the soul exercises all the functions of the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive life. It is there she ponders, examines, and weeps for her sins, and in that Heart which once conceived an inexplicable regret and was pierced with sorrow for them, she implores God to pardon them. It is in that infinitely pure and holy Heart that holds in aversion and extreme horror the smallest venial sin, that she avoids the least offences and the lightest faults. It is in that penitent and afflicted Heart that she performs her mortifications and penances. It is in that generous and invincible Heart that she attacks her vices, combats her evil inclinations, resists the assaults of her enemies, and gains glorious victories. And if sometimes she falls

into desolation and aridity, into weariness and heaviness of spirit, she suffers as she should in that Heart which in the Garden of Olives was desolate and weighed down with sadness even unto death.

It is in that most humble, most patient, and most perfect Heart that she exercises humility, patience, virtues and good works; there she prays mentally and vocally, there makes her preparation for Holy Communion and her thanksgiving afterward, being unable to select a holier, a more devotional and more recollected oratory.

It is in that Heart, all burning with love for men, that she loves her neighbor, that she bears the imperfections of his body and soul, and suffers the injuries he does her, imitating St. Paul, who wrote to the faithful of Philippi: "God is my witness, how I long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ." (Philipp. i. 8.) God is my witness how I love you all in the bowels and in the Heart of Jesus Christ. It was thence he, the Apostle, spoke to them, wrote to them, instructed them, reproved them, consoled them, and treated with them in everything; and consequently he acted in a holy and godlike manner, tracing for us an

excellent pattern for our intercourse with our neighbor.

Finally, it is in that Heart, in perfect submission to its inspirations and motions, that the just soul performs all her actions both interior and exterior, with moderation, meekness, calmness, and pure intentions.

It is also in that Heart, as in the true sanctuary and home of the unitive life, that she practices its peculiar functions, that she produces the acts of the love of choice, the love of complacency, the love of good-will, the love of preference and of aspiration; that she makes acts of adoration, glorification, praise, purity of intention, gratitude, offering of self, abandonment to the guidance of God, detachment of affection from all creatures, and elevation above all the things of earth, and that she possesses and enjoys repose and delight in God as in her centre.

Behold the occupation of the soul in the wound of the Heart. Like one admitted into some beautiful palace, looking curiously above, below, and all around him, at the rare and wonderful treasures, she considers attentively what she finds in that Heart, remarks therein hatred for sin, the price of her salvation, our Lord's esteem for her, the love he has shown

her, and a thousand other admirable and most beautiful things.

Therefore let us go to that Side pierced for us, let us enter that Heart burning with love for us, let us dwell there night and day, never coming out, and let us there perform all our actions. "This is the gate of the Lord, the just shall enter into it" (Ps. cxvii. 20), says David. Behold the gate of the Lord, the wound of his side; the just shall be careful to enter and make there their dwelling.

6. Fear.

As the Cross of Christ is the surest foundation of our hopes, it is also the greatest source of our fears. The Cross will be the infallible cause of our salvation if we live well; but if we live an evil life and do not correct our vices, it will be the certain instrument of our ruin. Our Lord's death is the mystery of our redemption and of our condemnation, and it is by the Cross that both the predestined and the reprobate insure their end, according as they make use of it.

To speak truly, what could the Eternal Father have given us more precious and more efficacious for our salvation, than his Son? And what could the Son have done and

suffered greater and more difficult than he did do and suffer? Could the Father and the Son have shown more clearly the excess of the infinite love they bear us, and have given us more positive proofs of their extreme desire to save us? Had the Father aught more perfect and that he loved more dearly than his Son, and the Son anything better, and that he valued more than his honor, his life, and himself? By the prophet Isaiah they ask us: "Now judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it?" (Is. v. 3, 4.) What more could I have given men, what more could I have endured to procure their salvation?

Therefore, what must remain for those who refuse to profit by the goodness of God, unless it be his justice; for those who abuse the Cross as a means of their salvation, unless it be to experience it as the instrument of his vengeance and of their damnation? This is what St. Paul very plainly shows us in his Epistle to the Hebrews, where he says: "Having therefore, brethren, a confidence in the entering into the Holies by the blood of Christ; a new and living way which he hath dedicated for us through the veil, that is to

say, his flesh." (Heb. x. 19, 20.) We have a hope of one day entering the sanctuary of God which is in Heaven, and of enjoying the felicity of the Saints through the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ, provided that to attain it we follow the path he has marked for us by his life while here below clothed with our flesh. "But, if we sin wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth, there is now left no sacrifice for sins; but a certain dreadful expectation of judgment, and the rage of a fire which shall consume the adversaries." (Ib. x. 26, 27.) If after the knowledge of so important a truth, after so perfect a love, so great a mercy, and so powerful a remedy, we take no thought of saving ourselves, but continue to offend God, we may look forward to being infallibly lost; we may consider our salvation gone, because we cannot expect a new Saviour, we have no right to hope that the Son of God will come again for us; that he will be seized, scourged, nailed to a cross, and spill his blood again for our sins. He has done this once—it is more than enough; he will not do it a second time. This is why, if we are not willing to make a good use of his death, we must hold it a certain thing that we will be judged by God with

extreme severity and terrible rigor, and condemned with all his enemies to eternal flames.

And let no one say that this punishment is too great; for the Apostle adds: "A man making void the law of Moses, dieth without any mercy under two or three witnesses. How much more do you think he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the blood of the testament unclean by which he was sanctified? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. x. 28, 29, 31.) If the breakers of the law of Moses convicted by two or three witnesses, found no mercy, but were put to death without leniency, how much more rigorously should not he be punished, who through an execrable impiety tramples under foot the blood of the Son of God that was spilled to wash away his sins, to sanctify and save him? Oh! what a terrible thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God when he is angered by the abuse of such mercy, and by contempt of the death of his Son!

Jesus going to Calvary said to the weeping women: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For if in the green wood they do

these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 28, 31.) If they treat so rudely the green wood which is still alive and therefore should be preserved, what will they do to the dry wood which is dead and is no longer good for anything but the fire? If the father chastise so severely his only and innocent son for the sake of his wicked and rebellious slave, with what severity and fury will he not chastise the slave himself if he does not correct his faults?

Not wishing to fall into the hands of God avenging the death of his Son, and being wise betimes, let us think seriously of making an excellent use of that death and applying to ourselves its merits and fruits, so that what is the basis of our salvation may not become the occasion of our ruin. "When our Lord shall come to judge us," says St. Augustine, "he will surely give us what he has promised, but he will likewise demand an account of what he has already given us and of what he has done to redeem us. Remember that having been ransomed with mercy you will be judged with justice." (Aug. Serm. xliv. 8.)

7. Prayers and requests.

Since the Cross is the mystery of our salvation, the arsenal that contains our arms, and the treasury whence we must draw our riches, we should constantly beseech our Lord to attach us to it, to communicate to us its salutary effects and impress upon us its grace and spirit; we should very frequently breathe and inhale our Lord suffering, dying, dead for us.

And as we are in a life where there is much to suffer, every day, and in many ways, why should we not fulfill the words of our Lord: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke ix. 23.) If any one would be my disciple he must renounce himself and carry his cross each day, and in that manner follow me. Moreover, if our cross is not well carried, and our sufferings well borne, instead of being useful to us, they will be injurious; but our Lord's cross and sufferings are able to sanctify ours and render them salutary. We ought in our crosses, in our trials, both interior and exterior, in our sicknesses, and still more in our death, to take great pains to unite ourselves to our Lord afflicted, suffering and dying, and to beg him

to bless, to purify, to sanctify and deify our afflictions and sufferings.

We ought to conjure him to distil from his sufferings over ours, and from his death over our death, a spirit of salvation, grace and life; to shed upon us a dew of patience, fortitude, humility, respect, submission, devotion, silence, love, and joy; so that we may suffer and die in a certain degree as he did, that our sufferings may be, to speak with St. Paul, the filling up of his (Coloss. i. 24), and our death as it were a sequel and continuation of his; that as we are dead in his death and in him as in our head, so he may also die in our death and in us as in his members.

This prayer is of very great importance, because our death is the decisive point of our salvation and the grand moment on which depends our eternal happiness or misery; for this reason it will be very well to repeat it frequently during the whole time of Lent, and still more frequently during Holy Week, especially on Good Friday, which is particularly consecrated to the remembrance of our Lord's death.

When in the morning service of that day you adore the Cross, recollect yourself and summon all your powers to the performance

of that devotion, bend the knees of your body and still more those of your soul before that sacred wood, and beholding upon it the image of a crucified One, make first a great act of faith in the truth that he who was fastened to the cross, whose representation you see, is the true God and your sovereign Lord whom you worship.

Secondly, make an act of sincere regret for your sins, recognizing and avowing that they were the cause of his torments and death; that it was your offences much more than the executioners that bound him to the column and tore him with scourges, that crowned him with thorns, that gave him blows and spat in his face, and that finally nailed him to the gibbet and caused his death. Conceive a penetrating sorrow and perfect repentance, and earnestly beg his forgiveness; say to him with the prophet: "What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands?" (Zach. xiii. 6.) Why these wounds in thy hands? Wherefore these torments and this death? Is it not to efface my sins, to pardon them? Then, I beseech thee, efface them, and pardon me! Thou dost sacrifice thyself for me; thou givest me thy blood and thy life; I cannot give thee nearly so much; but at least I give thee

a heart contrite and humbled, and a soul grieved at having offended thee. "A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Ps. l. 19.) Behold the sacrifice thou dost ask of me, and which I give thee with a firm resolution of never offending thee again, but of loving thee with all my strength, since I am so strictly bound to do so.

In the third place, offer your crucified Lord countless acts of thanksgiving for all the trouble he has taken, all the evils he has suffered for your salvation, without which you would inevitably be lost forever, and through which you may be eternally happy if you desire.

In the fourth place, hope from his bounty the grace and all the aids you need; and then in detail ask them of him, recommending to him your salvation and the hour of your death, and supplicating him by his wounds, his blood, and his death, to apply their virtue and merits to yours and to render it pleasing to him—to render it for you the gate of life and the entrance into that abode where you can honor him, adore him, praise him, love him, and thank him eternally for all he has done and suffered for you. After this, in the same spirit of faith, adoration, repentance,

love, gratitude, hope, and supplication, kiss his sacred wounds.

III.—THE VIRTUES.

1. Imitation.

It would be something terrible indeed, and worthy of severe punishment if, after God has taken so much pains, and has been pleased to suffer so many evils to give us examples and patterns of virtue, we should pass them by, caring not to make use of them.

This is why we are exhorted to "Look, and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee in the mount." (Exod. xxv. 40.) Look, look attentively at what is passing on the mountain of Calvary, and imitate as closely as thou canst what is there shown thee. Consider the excellence of the model, the perfection of the acts he shows thee, the mercy with which he shows them, and his design.

His excellence is infinite since he is God; the perfection of what he shows, of the virtues he teaches, is complete in every way; his mercy is extreme since it moved him to subject himself to so much misery and to endure so many sufferings; and his design is thy salvation and beatitude. "Jesus Christ," says

St. Peter, "suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps." (I. Pet. ii. 21.)

It is a sovereign honor to imitate God because he is the most excellent model that can be proposed ; if there is more glory in painting after an Apelles or a Raphael than after an ignoble artist, it is certainly infinitely more honorable to take our Lord for our pattern than man in whom there must always be some fault.

Moreover, it is infinitely useful and advantageous to us to follow such a model, not only because there is nothing in him for us to fear, he being the highest degree of all possible perfection, but also because he inspires us with the strength and gives us the skill to imitate him ; still further, because the sign and assurance of our predestination and salvation consist in our resemblance to our Lord, and particularly to our Lord crucified who has merited for us on the cross the graces of predestination and salvation, and all the blessings we shall ever possess. St. Paul says : "May I be found in him . . . being made conformable to his death." (Phil. iii. 9, 10.) If I would find myself in Jesus Christ and have in him my salvation and my beatitude, I must

assume the figure of his death, I must bear the likeness of his passion, I must exhibit in myself the virtues he practiced on the cross.

This is absolutely necessary to whosoever desires to be saved, and it is the reason why the same Apostle wrote to the Romans: "Heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." (Rom. viii. 17.) You have received in baptism the spirit of adoption of the children of God, of whom consequently you are heirs, and co-heirs with his Son Jesus Christ, provided always that you suffer with him, for except on this condition the thing is impossible. And St. Paul writes the same thought to his disciple Timothy: "A faithful saying. For if we be dead with him, we shall live also with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (II. Tim. ii. 11.) It is an indisputable truth and one of the chief articles of our faith, that if we die to sin with Jesus Christ we shall live gloriously with him, if we share his sufferings we shall be admitted to the enjoyment of his blessings. St. John says the same: "Partner in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus." (Apoc. i. 9.) Participating in the tribulation and in the kingdom! These

two things are inseparable, the one from the other; the first cannot be without the second, nor the second without the first. Tribulation borne in the patience of Jesus Christ leads most surely to the kingdom, and the kingdom surely follows tribulation well borne. This should greatly console and strengthen us in our sufferings.

See, then, the union of the cross and salvation, the participation of the afflictions and blessings, the pains and pleasures, the infamies and honors of our Lord, necessary to be members of such a head and to bear the marks of our predestination and eternal happiness. We must be crucified with him, we must say with St. Paul: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross." (Gal. ii. 19.) I am crucified with Jesus Christ as a member is with the head. When our Lord was fastened to the cross, his whole body was fastened to it; not only his head was upon the cross, but his arms, his legs, all his members, not excepting a single one. The same thing holds with his mystical body; all its members must be crucified with him, and consequently you, too, unless you would renounce the glorious quality of being of the number of his members.

2. Humility.

Our Lord on the cross has given us most excellent and finished patterns of all the virtues, as is easy for any one willing to pay ever so slight attention to remark; but I shall confine myself to the four principal ones, humility, obedience, patience, and charity, which St. Bernard says correspond to the four extremities of the cross—humility to the foot, obedience to the right arm, patience to the left, and charity to the top.

To commence with humility which St. Paul calls the particular virtue of Jesus Christ. Was it not unequaled in him when he abased himself at the feet of his apostles, and yet more, at the feet of a traitor, to wash them? when he was seized and sold for only thirty pieces of silver, and thus was horribly contemned since the least thing in him was worth more than all imaginable worlds, was of a value absolutely infinite on account of the infinite dignity of his person? when he was placed beneath Barabbas, when the people cared more for an infamous murderer than for him who was innocence and sanctity? when they gave him blows which are the most cutting insults a man of position and spirit can

receive? when they plucked out his beard as though he were a knave who did not deserve to be a man nor to bear the sign of manhood? when they bandaged his eyes to tell him that, instead of being the prophet he thought himself, he could not see further than his nose? when they put on his shoulders an old scarlet robe and in his hand a reed, making him appear a ridiculous mock king whose kingdom was a true reed, frail, shaky, and hollow; and then a white robe as though he were a fool of whom they were making a plaything? when they put on his head a crown of thorns as painful as it was infamous? when they bent their knees before him to mock him with grotesque salutations? when they harshly struck him on his head with the reed, addressing him insolent and coarse words? when they spat in his face, and offered him all the other indignities their enraged hearts could invent?

Finally, they nailed him to a gibbet, which was the most ignominious of all punishments and deaths; and this on the Feast of the Passover, the most solemn feast of the year, in presence of an almost innumerable multitude of spectators, not in a prison but on a mountain, not at night and by the light of torches, but at noon in the full light of mid-

day; and between two thieves as though he were the most unworthy, the most criminal, and the most wicked of all men.

Behold a part of the humility our Lord practiced in his passion! Reflecting upon it St. Paul had good reason to say "He humbled himself." (Philipp. ii. 8.) And our Lord himself, speaking by the mouth of David, says: "I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi. 7.) Seeing me so abused and disgraced, who would take me for a man? Isaiah calls him "the most abject of men (Is. liii. 3), because he was abased and humiliated more than any man of any condition ever was before.

And has not our Lord performing such prodigious acts of humility and lowering himself to such depths, a good right to say to us: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart?" (Matt. xi. 29.) And have not we a strict obligation to imitate him? If we do not, are we not worthy of severe punishments? God humbled himself and put himself beneath all to give us an example, and we still wish to raise ourselves up? What pride can be found in any human heart that the humility of a God cannot cure?

"When," says St. Bernard speaking to our

Lord and then to us, "when, my Lord, thou didst kneel before Judas who thou didst know had formed the horrible design of betraying thee and plotting thy death, and with thy most holy hands didst touch, didst bathe and wipe his accursed feet that were impatient to go to shed thy blood—O man! O dust! O ashes, who seest this! canst thou yet be proud and have a haughty spirit? Consider Jesus Christ, the Creator of the universe and the dread Judge of the living and the dead, in his humility and meekness bending the knee, prostrating himself before a man, the most villainous, the most perfidious of all men, the man who betrayed him; learn how he is truly meek and humble of heart, and be confused at thy pride." Thus discourses St. Bernard. (Bern. Serm. de Passione.)

In another place, considering the power of our Lord's humility to make us embrace that virtue, he says: "Why, think you my brethren, did the God of Majesty humble and annihilate himself, if it were not to oblige you to do the same? Therefore I earnestly entreat you not to permit that he should give you uselessly so precious an example, but to endeavor to form yourself upon it. Love humility which is the foundation and guardian of all the vir-

tues; practice it in your thoughts, your affections, your words and works, not letting it appear that man should find it difficult .to humble himself when God stooped so low." (Bern. Serm. I. in Nat. Dom.)

Our Lord after having humbled himself before his apostles, and having washed their feet, said to them: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also. Amen, amen, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his lord" (Jno. xiii. 15, 16.); neither are you more exalted than I.

Likewise St. Paul says: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Philipp. ii. 5.) Adopt the sentiments of humility which Jesus Christ had, follow the example he has given you, repeat frequently to yourself these words: "He humbled himself." (Philipp. ii. 8.) See him in his humiliations, see him loaded with opprobrium and contempt, and realize that he says to you again and again: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29), in order that you should do your best to imitate me.

3. Obedience.

Saint Paul speaking of the obedience our Lord practiced in his passion, says: "He

humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philipp. ii. 8.) See in what manner, and how far our Lord teaches us to obey.

He obeyed his Father so far as to suffer death, which is what nature dreads most ; and not an ordinary death, but the most frightful of all, the death of the cross. He obeyed most wicked judges, doing and enduring whatever they commanded ; he obeyed the soldiers and executioners, going and coming as they wished, standing or sitting according to their pleasure, giving his hands, his feet, his head, his shoulders, and all parts of his body without any resistance, for them to exercise upon them all their rage could suggest.

Whence he tells us by Isaiah : " The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I do not resist ; I have not gone back. I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them. I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me." (Is. l. 5, 6.)

The Lord God has opened my ear as the organ of obedience to hear his will and execute it ; he has made me know he desired that after having suffered extreme agonies, I should die on a gibbet for his glory and the salvation

of men. I have heard with respect this decree; although so terrible I have not contradicted nor opposed it, but have received it with submission, and have accomplished it heartily. I have abandoned my soul to sadness, my body to torments, my brow to thorns, my shoulders to scourges, my eyes to tears, my ears to insults, my tongue to gall, my hands and feet to nails, and I have not turned away my face from those that spat upon it and covered it with blows, "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philipp. ii. 8.)

Adam would not obey God his Creator and his Sovereign Lord, by abstaining from a forbidden fruit, though in the midst of an abundance of others the use of which was permitted him. The Son of God obeyed wicked judges and cruel executioners even to suffering all possible severities, even to death, and to the death of the cross; he obeyed so far for love of us.

After this, ought we to find any difficulty in obeying, and submitting for love of him to small and reasonable requirements? St. Bernard says on this subject: "Learn, O man, to obey; learn, O earth, to submit thyself; learn, O dust, to do the will of others! God has

done man's will, and thou desirest to rule! And by this means thou presumest to prefer thyself to thy Creator, since he humbled himself beneath man!" "Would to God," continues this saint, "that as often as I have the accursed thought of esteeming myself more than others, of preferring myself to any one, our Lord would make me the reproach he made his apostle: 'Go behind me, Satan, because thou savorest not the things that are of God.'" (Matt. xvi. 23.)

Let us learn, then, from the example of our Lord to subject ourselves; and when an occasion presents itself of performing an act of obedience, and we find it difficult either on the part of our judgment or our will, or as regards the exterior execution, let us represent to ourselves our Lord submissive and obedient. Let us breathe him into us in his heroic practice of that virtue, and let us stifle all our feelings of resistance by the strength and sweetness of these words which we should repeat many times: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philipp. ii. 8), and that for me.

Let us accustom ourselves to break our will in everything, disregarding its tenacity; let us look upon it as our most dangerous enemy, as

the source of all our troubles, the principle of all our sins, and the root of all our evils.

4. Patience.

"Patience is necessary for you, that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise," says St. Paul. (Hebr. x. 36.) You need patience to do the will of God, and thus become worthy of the beatitude he has promised you

No one ever practiced patience more perfectly, nor taught it to us in a more excellent manner, than our Lord during his life, and still more in his passion. "All the actions of Christ," says St. Cyprian, "from his entrance into the world, were accompanied and marked by patience." St. Cyprian goes on to prove this by the details of our Lord's life and death, and then concludes with these words: "Our Lord suffered without any interruption until his death, until patience attained in him the height of its perfection." (Cypr. l. de bona Patient.)

Truly his life was but a continual suffering, a tissue of all sorts of sorrows; for he suffered from the first moment of life until it was cut off by the violence of most cruel torments upon a gibbet; he suffered the privation of earthly goods, living always in extreme pov-

erty; he suffered in his honor a thousand opprobriums, being called a blasphemer, an exciter of sedition, a drunkard, a man possessed by the devil; he suffered in his doctrine, passing for an idiot, a fool, and an imposter; in his power, being taken for a magician holding communication with the devil, through whose art he worked his miracles; in short, he suffered in all parts of his body, and in all the faculties of his soul.

For this reason Isaiah calls him "A man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity." (Is. liii. 3.) A man filled with sorrows and who knew well from experience what it was to suffer and be afflicted. He was in so pitiful a condition, so disfigured, that the same prophet assures us he could not be recognized and might be taken for a leper. "And we have seen him and there was no sightliness, and we have thought him as it were a leper." (Is. liii. 2, 4.) There being no part of his body from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head that was not afflicted and sick.

He himself utters by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah these sad words: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow." (Lam. i. 12.) All ye that pass through this mortal life, look

upon me, see if ever person of any age or condition suffered so much as I, if ever there was sorrow to be compared to mine.

Let us then bear our crosses and afflictions after the model of our Lord whom we ought very frequently to picture to ourselves in the mystery of his passion, and to inhale in his suffering state in order that we may receive from him strength and courage to sustain us when we are called to suffer. "Christ having suffered in the flesh," says St. Peter, "be you also armed with the same thought." (1 Peter iv. 1.) Arm yourself with the thought and the remembrance of what Jesus Christ suffered during the course of his life and particularly in his death, when you have need to combat the enemies of your salvation, so that you may have courage to gain the victory; this remembrance will serve you as most powerful offensive and defensive weapons.

The history of the blessed Elzear relates that he had attained such a degree of patience that no insult or injury could wound him; whence St. Delphina, his wife and a most pure virgin, one day gently reproached him as being too insensible. The Saint replied that he had not ceased to feel in his interior attacks of impatience and motions of anger when

injuries were done him, but that he stifled them, immediately fixing his thoughts on the injuries and outrages our Lord suffered for him, whom desiring to imitate and to do something for his love, he said to himself: Ah! well, Elzear, when thy servants shall give thee blows, when they shall pluck out thy beard and spit in thy face, even that will not approach what the Son of God endured for thee. He repeated to himself again and again these words, and kept his mind applied to this thought until the imperfect feeling was quenched and his spirit calmed.

This practice is excellent; and the advice is very good, when you feel attacks of impatience, anger, pride, or disgust, to consider the patience, meekness, humility, and charity of our Lord, and to apply these virtues to your soul as antidotes and sovereign remedies until the vicious motion passes and the temptation has vanished; it certainly will vanish if you make good use of this means.

When we endure some evil in body or soul our mind naturally turns immediately to think of the evil, to reflect upon it, to examine it, to consider its causes, circumstances, and consequences, and we dwell upon it; hence arise trouble, vexations, impatience, anger, desires

of vengeance, and many other wrong feelings that do not cure the evil but rather make it worse. A most important counsel is, when you are seized by some affliction to wisely turn your mind from it and promptly fix your attention on something that will sustain, strengthen, and console you, such as the paradise that awaits you, the reward that is prepared for you if you make a good use of this suffering, but especially on our Lord suffering and crucified for you.

5. Active Charity.

Such was the charity of our Lord, who, not content with simple affections and words only, testified it to us by the most wonderful effects and the most undeniable proofs possible; and thus he showed us how we ought to love him: "Learn from Jesus Christ," says St. Bernard, "how you should love Jesus Christ." St. John says he loved us to the end: "Jesus having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end." (Jno. xiii. 1.) He loved us to the end, to the last extremities, doing and suffering for us all that he could do and suffer. To love, according to the universal opinion, is to desire and to do good to the person beloved; and, if you do him good only

by doing yourself injury and causing yourself much suffering, you prove by this that you love him more than you love yourself.

Our Lord has given us his body and his soul, his humanity and his divinity, all the fruits of his life and death; he has delivered us from all evils and loaded us with all blessings. This is to love, and to love to the end.

We must love a man very much in order to resolve to die for him, because we have nothing that is naturally dearer to us than our life. Thus our Lord says that to lay down life for a friend is the most evident and perfect sign of perfect love. (Jno. xv. 13.) And it is a still greater sign of love to die for that friend a most painful and infamous death; and yet greater if it is a person of exalted rank who dies for a man of low degree from whom he has received extreme indignities and cruel injuries. You know that our Lord has loved us in this manner, and that his love has had qualities beyond all that we can imagine.

He has loved us *in finem*, that is to say for a most pure and most disinterested end, regarding only our good. God was not less happy before the creation of the world, when he lived hidden in himself, than at present, when he is honored, praised, and loved by

angels and men. As all the hatred and blasphemies of the damned do not diminish his felicity, so all the praises and benedictions of the saints do not increase it. "If thou sin," said Eliu to Job, "what shalt thou hurt him? If thou do justly, what shalt thou give him, or what shall he receive of thy hand?" (Job xxxv. 6, 7.) If thou sin, dost thou think to do harm to God? And if thou livest well, what wilt thou give him, what will he receive from thy hand that will benefit him? It is to us, not to him, that the life and death of our Lord has been useful and salutary.

He has loved us *in finem*, to the end, with, on his part, an inviolable constancy, without change or relaxation. As God he has loved us from eternity to continue his love throughout eternity; thus he says by Jeremiah: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." And as man he has loved us from the first moment of his life till his death, and he will love us always.

He is our model. Learn then, O man, learn from Jesus Christ how thou shouldst love Jesus Christ. Consider that his charity toward thee was active, and his love effective; consider what effects he produced, what proofs he has given thee of his love, and endeavor to

make return to him in the same proportion. An ancient writer very justly says: "*Sanguinem dedit, sanguinem debes.*" He gave thee his blood, thou oughtest to give him thine. He gave thee his honor, his comfort, his body, his soul, and all he possessed; thou oughtest then to return him thy honor, thy comfort, and all thou hast. Is this too much! Is thy blood worth his? Is thy honor equal to his? What comparison is there between thee and him? Do then for him what he has done for thee; and since he has loved thee to these extremes, if thou canst not go so far, at least love him with all thy heart and with all thy strength.

As a help to this it will be very useful to look at our Lord crucified, and to pause to consider him attentively; for as it is not possible to remain near a great fire without feeling the heat, so you cannot see our Lord loving you so much as to die for you without being touched with love for him.

Beholding him in his dying state, keeping your eyes for some time fixed upon him, say and say again these words, calmly and attentively: There is my God, my Creator, and my Saviour. What has he done for me, and what am I doing for him? What has he

suffered for me, and what do I suffer for him?

What has he given me, and what do I give him?

How does he love me, and how do I love him?

How do I intend to love him for the future, and as a testimony of my love what will I do and suffer for him?

And since for this you have need of his assistance, earnestly beg him by his excessive love for you to grant it to you.

Gazing upon him, and even taking him in your arms, say with St. Ignatius the martyr: "My love has been crucified!" (Ignat. M. Ep. ad Rom.) God has been crucified for me! Jesus Christ has been hanged on the cross for me! If I should see a miserable man hanged for my sake, I would be touched, and I could not help having extraordinary feelings for him. This is not a mere man who is hanged for me, but the true God, the Creator of the universe, Jesus Christ. What a powerful motive for contrition and love!

Therefore, as Jesus Christ has been crucified for love of me, I desire also for love of him to be crucified, and to nail to his cross my love

of honors, of pleasures, of riches, of all creatures, and especially of myself; so that I may say with St. Paul: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross." (Gal. ii. 19.) My body, my soul, my thoughts, my affections, my words, and my actions, are nailed to the cross with Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.

So it was that Saint Clare, having, by thinking of our Lord crucified, engraved his image on her mind, gazed upon him incessantly, and through this gaze felt her heart languish and die to all the things of earth, and become enkindled with the love of our Lord and the desire of poverty and opprobrium, and at the same time grow strong to practice, in a heroic degree, humility, patience, forbearance, and all the virtues.

IV.—MEDITATIONS.

(Under this heading Father Saint-Jure refers to certain chapters of a work called "*La Vie Illuminative*," The Illuminative Life, as suitable subjects for the meditations. He also suggests that it will be very useful to meditate from the Horologe, or Clock of the Passion, another part of this book, which is about to follow.)

V.—READINGS.

(We again refer the reader to what has been said under this heading in Chapter III.)

VI.—ASPIRATORY VERSES.

"With everlasting kindness have I had mercy on thee, said the Lord thy Redeemer." (Is. liv. 8.)

"O man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity." (Ex. Is. liii. 3.) O man of sorrows and experienced in suffering, what compassion and regret is ours to see thee endure so much!

"What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands? And he shall say: 'With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me.'" (Zach. xiii. 6.) "In the house of my beloved." (Ibid. juxta septuag.) Lord, who has made these wounds that we see in thy hands? He shall reply: It is those who ought to love me, and whom I love, who have made them and have treated me so outrageously.

"From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein." (Ex. Is. i. 6.) From the soles of the feet to the crown of the head there is nothing in thee which does not suffer, no part, either internal or external that is not afflicted.

"He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins." (Is. liii. 5.) He has been tormented for our sins; our iniquities have brought him to this state, and we are the true causes of all his sufferings. What a reason for sorrow and contrition!

"I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi. 7.) I am a worm and not a man; I have not been treated as God, nor even as a man, but as a worm of the earth, as the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.

"He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth." (Is. liii. 7.) He shall go to sufferings, to ignominies, and to death, as a gentle sheep that is led to the slaughter, and as an innocent lamb that is sheared and makes no cry; he shall not open his lips to defend himself nor to complain. "Jesus held his peace," says the Holy Gospel. (Matt. xxvi. 63.) Jesus did not reply to the questions of the wicked judges and the calumnies of his enemies; and in his great suffering and misery he said not a word, but preserved a profound silence, a wondrous meekness of spirit, and a perfect

forbearance toward his persecutors—he opened not his mouth.

"Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (Jno. xv. 13.) No one can give his friends a greater or a more certain proof of love, than to die for them. What then is it to die for enemies, and for abject and contemptible enemies as all sinners are in God's sight.

"He humbled himself." (Philipp. ii. 8.) He humbled himself. But how far? To what depths?

"Becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Ibid.) He made himself obedient even unto death, and the death of the cross.

THE CLOCK OF THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

While the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the living source of all the graces that flow from Heaven for our salvation, and the general cause of all the blessings we possess or ever will possess, is very useful at all times when we apply it to ourselves by considerations, affections, and acts of virtue; nevertheless, we must believe that it is especially so on the days and at the hours when

it was accomplished, just as the sun has more light and heat at certain hours of the day than at others.

Expressing this idea the Book of Ecclesiasticus says: "The sun when he appeareth showing forth at his rising, an admirable instrument, the work of the Most High. At noon he burneth the earth; and who can abide his burning heat? As one keeping a furnace in the works of heat." (Eccl. xliii. 2, 3.) The material sun, that admirable instrument of God to produce the operations of nature, gives light to the world at its rising, and again when it declines and sets, but at noon it burns the earth, and we cannot endure the intensity of its rays. The Sun of Justice, so the doctors of the Church explain, the master-piece of the skill of the Most High, illumines and warms us at his rising which is his birth, and still more at his setting which is his death.

At his meridian, when he was nailed to the cross, he fired men with his love. The torments he suffered for them are as so many enkindled furnaces; and where is the soul that can endure their heat and not be burned and changed into flames?

To enlighten you on this subject, we have

fashioned and wound up this Clock of the Passion of our Lord : if you listen you will hear it strike, not two or three strokes, but an infinite number ; the incomparable love of our Lord for men, performing so many things, and enduring so many woes for them ! It will warn you to also do and suffer something for his love, and to imitate the virtues of which he has given you examples.

This clock will begin to strike at six on Thursday evening, and will continue till six on Friday evening, for between these hours our Lord's passion was accomplished.

Each hour will contain four things :—

First, one, and sometimes more than one mystery of the passion which you must represent to yourself not as though it took place sixteen (eighteen) hundred years ago, but as if it were now passing before your eyes, and which you must regard with great attention, and with a simple, affectionate, silent gaze.

Secondly, the spirit of the mystery and the virtue to be imitated. If we often propose the same virtues, do not be astonished ; it will be because they are the most important and the most necessary, and are not sufficiently understood and practiced.

Thirdly, the prayer to ask for that spirit and that virtue.

Fourthly, some aspiratory verses having relation to the mystery.

You must at each hour apply yourself to these four things according as you are able; and because sleep will rob you of some hours, you may occasionally vary the order, and after having sufficiently occupied yourself with the exercises of the day, may leave them for some time, and take in their place those of the night hours, so as not to be deprived of their fruit; or at least on Thursday evening before going to rest, or on Friday morning at your rising, say the prayers of the hours of sleep; and doubtless you will abridge your sleep, if you feel as you ought toward the passion of our Lord.

Father Avila used to say that whoever could permit himself to sleep during the whole of Thursday night, knowing that our Lord was seized Thursday evening, that he spent that night in suffering, and that on Friday he died on a gibbet for us, was an ingrate toward his Saviour, and did not correspond to the magnitude of such a benefit.

I add as a final suggestion that souls particularly attracted to devotion to the passion,

need not confine themselves to one hour to consider the mystery and perform the other exercises assigned to each hour, but may devote one, or even several days, if they wish, and if they feel their hearts opening, so as to draw more nourishment and profit.

PREPARATION.

Persuade yourself that our Lord addresses you these words of the prophet Jeremiah to move you to remember his passion, to look upon him in his sufferings, and to listen to this clock: "Remember my poverty and transgression (Afflictionis, Heb.), the wormwood, and the gall." (Lam. iii. 19.) Remember my poverty, my persecutions, and my afflictions; consider the gall, the bitterness, and all the evils I have endured for thee. Reply in the words that immediately follow: "I will be mindful and remember, and my soul shall languish within me. These things I shall think over in my heart, therefore will I hope. The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed, because his commiserations have not failed." (Ibid. iii. 20, 21, 22.)

Yes, I will remember and consider them; and I do not doubt that this will produce in me strong impressions and that my soul will

be, as it were, withered by the wonderful grandeur of the things I recall.

This poverty, however, these afflictions and woes of my Saviour, are sweet to me, because they are the foundation of my hopes, and the greatest effect of the mercy of God which has not failed us and without which we would be lost beyond recovery.

Prayer.

O Jesus, my dearest Saviour, only hope of my soul, grant me grace to bear continually and to celebrate worthily the memory of thy sacred passion, to enter through the gates of faith, hope, charity, and imitation of thee, into thy wounds; where, establishing my dwelling, I may forget myself and all creatures and remember thee alone, to live in thee and thee in me all the rest of my days. Amen.

SIX O'CLOCK THURSDAY EVENING.

Jesus Christ Washing the Feet of his Apostles.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord seeing his apostles greatly afflicted by the news he had given them that he would soon leave them, was touched with compassion, and said to them with extreme gentleness and

tenderness: "Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. I will not leave you orphans. It is expedient to you that I go. I go away, and I come unto you." (Jno. xiv. 27, 18; xvi. 7; xiv. 28.) Because I have told you that I must leave you, sadness has taken possession of your hearts; but be not troubled nor afraid; I will not leave you orphans, neither will I abandon you. It is for your good that I go; but I will go in such a manner that I will soon return to you.

After having celebrated with them the legal Passover, and eaten of the Paschal Lamb, a figure of himself in the mysteries of his life that were immediately to follow, he desired as a sequel to his exemplification of all the virtues, to unite and condense them into two as the principal ones, namely, humility and charity.

And beginning with humility: he rises from the table, lays aside his robe, girds himself with a towel, pours water into a basin, and then kneeling, washes the feet of his apostles.

Who would not be astonished and touched with devotion at seeing the King of kings and the Lord of lords at whose name every knee bends and the very columns of heaven tremble, abased, humiliated, kneeling before his

disciples who are seated, bathing with his most pure and most holy hands their unclean and offensive feet, carefully and tenderly wiping them with the towel with which he was girded, and then kissing them with his divine lips; passing thus from one to another, making himself their valet in an act so low, in a service so abject? What abasement, what a humiliation of the Infinite Majesty of heaven and earth, to be thus prostrate before rough, coarse persons, before poor sinners, and, what is still more astonishing, before a traitor and the most wicked of men!

2. The Spirit and Virtue of the Mystery

The spirit of this action and its special virtue are evidently humility, which we are under obligation to imitate; for our Lord, after having performed it, said to his apostles, and to us through them: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." And he had already told us: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. xi. 29.)

3. Prayer.

O perfect Model of humility! my Lord Jesus Christ, who hast been pleased to assume

the nature, quality, and employment of a servant, and who in that condition didst wash the feet of thy apostles! I pray and beseech thee to cleanse me from my pride, my vanity, and my good opinion of myself, and to give me the spirit and sentiments of true humility of heart. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"He humbled himself." (Philipp. ii. 8.) Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, humbled himself so far as to wash the feet of men and of sinners.

Let us ask with St. Peter: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" (Jno. xiii. 6.) Dost thou abase thine infinite majesty to this? Dost thou thus perform the duties of the meanest servants?

"If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me." (Ib. xiii. 8.) If I wash thee not, and if by my example and grace I do not purify thee from pride, the source of all sins, thou shalt never have part with me, but I will cut thee off from my society for ever.

"Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." (Ib. xiii. 9.) Ah! Lord, lest that horrible misfortune should befall me, wash not only my feet, but even my hands and my

head. Wash my feet for my affections, my hands for my works, my head for my thoughts, and purify my whole body, my whole soul from my pride and all my stains.

SEVEN O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ Instituting the Blessed Sacrament.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord intending to leave his apostles, before withdrawing and bidding them the last farewell, gave them the most magnificent banquet ever known on earth, since he gave himself as the food, his body, his blood, his soul, and his divinity, saying to them: "Take ye, and eat: This is my body. Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood." (Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28.) Take and eat; what I give you is my body. Drink ye all of this chalice; it contains my blood.

2. The Spirit and Virtue of the Mystery.

These are chiefly charity and love. Love has for its characteristic to desire, and to procure by every possible means, the union of the person who loves with the one who is loved. Our Lord loved men infinitely, and this infinite love caused him to invent this

admirable and surprising means of uniting himself to them as their food; and food forms with the one who receives it, the most intimate, the most inseparable, and the closest of all natural unions.

Thus St. John speaking of this mystery, says: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end." (Jno. xiii. 1.) Jesus having loved his own during his whole life, loved them still more at its close, when he instituted the Blessed Sacrament and made of himself their nourishment, so that he might unite himself to them; he desired this union so ardently that he told them: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer." (Luke xxii. 15.) I have earnestly desired to celebrate this Passover with you before I die and leave you.

The spirit, then, and the special virtue of this mystery, are the infinite love our Lord bears us, and the burning desire this love kindles in his heart to unite and give himself to us. We ought to exercise the same sentiments toward him with all the fullness of our affections, and so much the more as all the glory and profit of the union will be for us.

3. Prayer.

O most loving and most amiable Jesus, who, through the excess of thine infinite love for us, didst place thyself under the species of bread and wine in order to come to us, and to unite and give thyself to us! I implore thee by this sacrament of love and union, and by all that can move thee, to deign to unite me inseparably with thee, to transform me into thyself, and by this union and transformation to oblige me to give thee my body and my soul, so that I may cease to belong to myself and may be wholly thine. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him." (Jno. vi. 57.) We are intimately united.

"Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved." (Cant. v. 1.) Eat, my friends, and drink; and you, my dearly beloved, be inebriated with love, so that the unequaled testimony I give you of my love may produce in a holy manner in your souls, forgetfulness of creatures and satisfaction of heart.

"And after the morsel, Satan entered into him." (Jno. xiii. 27.) But we must carefully prepare for this divine food, learning wisdom at the expense of Judas, into whose soul after he had eaten, the devil entered and took new possession, thus rendering the Blessed Sacrament not a communion with Jesus Christ, but a disunion and an eternal separation.

EIGHT O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ giving the New Commandment of Love of our Neighbor, and Praying for the Elect.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord, after the washing of the feet of his apostles and the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, commanded the apostles to love one another, saying to them: "These things I command you, that you love one another." (Jno. xv. 17.) "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." (Jno. xiii. 35.) I command you to love one another, and I desire that by this it may be known whether you are my disciples or not.

"A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another as I have loved you." (Jno. xiii. 34.)

Then Jesus prayed to his Father for his elect, that they might be protected, sanctified, and united among themselves by a perfect and entire charity. "Lifting up his eyes to Heaven, he said: 'I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me, because they are thine.'" (Jno. xvii. 1, 9.) I pray not for the world, for those who have the spirit of the world, and whose hearts are on earth, whose bad life renders them unworthy of the happiness thou hast prepared for them; I pray not for them as I do pray for the predestinate whom thou hast given me, because they belong to thee in a particular manner.

"Holy Father, keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil." (Jno. xvii. 11, 15.) Holy Father, take under thy protection those whom thou hast given me; defend them against all the enemies of their salvation, so that they may not be lost. I do not ask thee to take them from the world, nor to deliver them from their afflictions, but to give them grace to suffer well, and to preserve them from sin.

"Sanctify them in truth. For them do I

sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." (Jno. xvii. 17, 19.) Sanctify them in truth, making them virtuous and holy, with a solid virtue, with a true, not an apparent holiness. And more, make them virtuous and holy in me who am the truth, so that all their virtues may be expressions of mine, and all their actions may be animated with my spirit, and modeled after my actions. I sanctify and sacrifice myself for them, so that they may be sanctified and may become holy likewise.

"That they may be one, as we also are; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. That they may be one, as we also are one; that they may be made perfect in one, and the world may know that thou hast sent me." (Jno. xvii. 11, 21, 22, 23.) I pray thee, Father, that they may be perfectly united, that they may be one in divine charity, even as we are; so that the world seeing among them such great charity, such perfect love, such intimate union, far surpassing the weakness of their corrupt nature, may believe that I am the true Messiah whom thou hast sent, who have obtained for them this grace

without which it would be impossible for them to love one another with such great and such pure love.

2. The Spirit and Virtue of the Mystery.

They are charity toward our neighbor; but —since it is a new commandment—practiced in a new fashion, that is to say, with new ardor and after the pattern of our Lord's charity. As our Lord has not loved us for any natural perfection of either body or soul, nor for any worldly advantage we may possess, but only in God, for God's glory and our salvation, even though we are filled with faults; and as he has loved us so much as to suffer for our sakes the death of the cross, we ought to love our neighbor in the same manner and to the same extent.

Our Lord having come from Heaven to earth to establish a law of charity and grace, not only between God and men, but also between men and their fellow-men, and having just instituted for men the Blessed Sacrament, and given them as a token of his infinite love his body and soul to be their food; being about to endure for their salvation horrible torments, and to suffer on a gibbet the most painful and ignominious death that was ever

known, had undoubtedly a good right to command them to love one another, and a most certain right to exact their obedience to this commandment.

3. Prayer.

O my dear and sovereign Lord! I return thee a thousand thanksgivings for this commandment of love, by which thou hast acquired for me as many friends, as many protectors and benefactors as there are men in the world. I beg thee to engrave it deeply in their hearts and in mine, so that we may love one another as thou hast loved us. May we have each for the other a cordial, sincere, disinterested, patient, humble, and discreet charity. May we have but one heart and one soul in thee, being ready and disposed, after thy example, to bear from one another, and for one another, whatever may be necessary for the salvation of all. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

The three most celebrated of the apostles have left us these remarkable exhortations to fraternal charity.

St. Peter says: "Before all things, have a

constant mutual charity among yourselves." (1. Pet. iv. 8.)

St. Paul: "Above all things, have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (Col. iii. 14.)

And St. John: "Dearly beloved, let us love one another; in this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil." (1. Jno. iv. 7, iii. 10.)

NINE O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ Praying in the Garden.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord having withdrawn from his three disciples about a stone's throw, began to pray to God his Father with most profound respect and singular humility. (Luke xxii. 41; Matt. xxvi. 39; Mark xiv. 35.) He commenced his prayer in a kneeling posture; but after a little he bent his sacred body and placed his face against the earth, so great was his reverence for the majesty of God.

His solicitude for his disciples having caused him to leave his prayer once, and twice, to go and see what they were doing, and having found them overcome by weariness and sleep on account of watching with him, he awakened them and encouraged them to pray, then re-

turned to continue his supplications. And while he prayed he was desolate beyond our power of expression, and assailed by that fearful sadness and that horrible anguish of heart which reduced him to the agony of death, and caused him to lose, in the form of sweat, pure blood; still he did not abandon his prayer, but on the contrary continued it with increased earnestness, and the more he was combated and attacked by sadness the more he prayed and persevered in praying.

2. *The Virtue.*

It is clear that it is prayer.

Our Lord desiring to open the bloody combat of his passion, and to do the grandest and most difficult thing that was ever done, that is, to destroy the devil, sin, and death, and to save the human race, entered the arena by supplication and armed with prayer.

His prayer was humble, respectful, fervent, persevering, and resigned in the most perfect degree.

And this was to teach us that in our struggles and temptations, in our times of sadness and in all our trials, we should have recourse to prayer, and should accompany our prayer with humility, reverence, devotion, fervor, per-

severance, and resignation, making it resemble our Lord's prayer in the Garden.

3. Prayer.

O my dear Saviour and my divine Master, all of whose actions are my instructions and my riches! I beg thee by the merit of thy prayer to teach me to pray, and thus fulfill in me the promise thou didst make by thy prophet when thou didst say: "I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of prayers." (Zach. xii. 10.) Grant that all my prayers may be animated with thy spirit, and accompanied by the conditions of thy prayer. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matt. xxvi. 41.) To be overcome by it.

"Pray without ceasing." (I. Thess. v. 17.) As you have constant need of the grace and assistance of God to enable you to avoid sin, to practice virtue and save your soul, therefore ask for it constantly and pray without ceasing.

"Cry to me, and I will hear thee." (Jerem.

xxxiii. 3.) Cry to me in prayer and I will answer thee; if thou do not cry, I will not hear thee; my ears are shut up and deaf to all voices save clamors and petitions made with affection and effort.

TEN O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ Disposed and Resigned to Suffer.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord considering all the torments of soul and body which he was about to suffer, the inferior part of his nature was exceedingly alarmed and filled with terrible apprehensions; whence that prayer to God his Father to spare him those torments and not to oblige him to drink that chalice of bitterness. But the superior part rising above that alarm and apprehension, made a heroic act of resignation, of absolute abandonment to his Father's will, saying: "But yet not my will, but thine be done." (Luke xxii. 42.) Behold me ready to suffer all that shall please thee. "I am ready for scourges, and my sorrow is continually before me." (Ps. xxxvii. 10.) I have continually before my eyes my sorrow and all the woes thy justice dost prepare for me to expiate

the sins of men; I am disposed to receive them. He saw his sufferings, the insults that would be offered him, all his torments one after the other, and looked upon them with submission and respect, desiring them, and welcoming them in spirit.

2. The Virtue.

It is resignation, annihilation of our will in everything. In order to imitate our Lord, represent to yourself all possible ills of body and soul, exterior and interior, temporal and eternal, excepting sin only; after having considered them attentively, make in union with our Lord a generous act of resignation, and of offering of yourself to endure them, even though you see among them the loss of your property, the deprivation of your comfort, the ruin of your honor, and your complete annihilation.

Continue to regard these objects of terror until you feel your interior growing calm, your resistance dying, and your will submitting absolutely to God's will to suffer whatever he shall desire. And later when it becomes necessary for you to practice this submission, remember the example of our Lord, and remember your resolution; and reflect how God's

will is the wisest, the holiest, and the best in every way, and that you cannot perform a more prudent action, nor one more honorable and useful, than to follow it blindly.

3. Prayer.

O good Jesus, who for love of me didst resign and submit thyself to thy Father's will, to endure the excessive sufferings of thy passion and death! I beseech thee by the merit of thy resignation and submission to give me the grace to never resist God's providence in my regard, but to yield to him entire authority over my body, my soul, and all that in time or eternity may belong to me. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." (Matt. vi. 10.) May thy will be done on earth and in me, as it is in Heaven—all that thou willest, and in the manner thou willest.

"Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight." (Matt. xi. 26.) Yes, Father, let it be so, since it pleases thee.

ELEVEN O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ in his Sadness, his Agony, and his Bloody Sweat.

I. *The Mystery.*

One of the saddest and most lamentable objects that was ever beheld, was our Lord in the Garden of Olives, where he was assailed by extreme sadness and weariness, and a desolation so terrible, caused by the clear and distinct vision of all the woes he was about to suffer, of all the sins of men, of the misfortunes they were bringing upon themselves, of the injuries God would receive from them, of the small number of those who would profit by his death and would be saved, and of the immense multitude who would be lost, that he said to his three most confidential apostles whom he had taken with him: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." (Matt. xxvi. 38.) My soul suffers such distress and such violent anguish of heart, that if I did not by my omnipotence restrain it in my body it would depart, and you would see me fall dead before you.

The inferior part of his soul which had a horror of death, and was terribly alarmed and frightened by the vision of the cruel sufferings, the bloody insults, and the multitude of fear-

ful woes prepared for him, and the superior part which was resolute and submissive to the will of the Eternal Father, sustained a combat so great and furious that our Lord fell beneath the struggles in agony, and, as it were, fainting; so that his Father sent him an angel to console and comfort him. And notwithstanding this succor, he experienced such a disturbance and such an overthrowing in his soul and body, because of the terrible encounter of the adverse parts of his human nature, that the pores of his body opened, and his blood flowed forth abundantly until it stained the ground, just as the perspiration issues from the pores of a sick man in the crisis of his disease.

2. *The Spirit of the Mystery.*

It is compassion for so mournful a condition of a person so eminent, so holy, and so near to us, and whom our sins have brought to this pitiful state.

This should cause us to conceive an extreme regret and to experience a most lively repentance.

And as our sins and vices are the true causes of our Lord's desolation, agony, and bloody sweat, the healing and consoling angel that

we can and ought to send him, is the correction of our vices and the reformation of our life. Therefore, do not neglect to console him thus.

3. Prayer.

O most desolate Jesus, overwhelmed by sorrow for me and through me! I implore thee to give me grace to enter into the knowledge and appreciation of thy sadness and agony, and by their merit to bear in imitation of thee, all my sadness and desolations. I behold thy blood flowing abundantly from thy body. Ah! Lord, do not permit that most precious liquor, that sovereign balm, capable of saving ten thousand worlds, to fall uselessly upon the earth. But let it fall upon my soul to purify and sanctify it, upon my understanding to dissipate its darkness, upon my will to break its obstinacy, upon my passions to rule them, and upon all my wounds to heal them. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad." (Matt. xxvi. 37.) "He began to fear and to be heavy." (Mark xiv. 33.) Our Lord

entering the Garden of Olives, began to be sad, to have fears and terrors.

"My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here and watch." (Mark xiv. 34.) My soul is sad and desolate even unto death; stay here and watch the lamentable state to which I am reduced for your sakes, in which your sins have placed me; if I pour out from my whole body tears of blood to efface your sins, you ought at least to shed a few tears from your eyes to wash them away.

MIDNIGHT.

Jesus Christ Betrayed by Judas and Seized by the Officers of Justice.

1. The Mystery.

Judas taking no care to guard his heart or to rule his passions, but allowing himself to be overcome by his avarice, gave entrance to the devil, who prompted him to form the accursed and unfortunate design of betraying and selling his good Master. (Luke xxii, 3.) Thereupon he went to find the chief priests and the magistrates, and made a bargain with them to deliver Jesus to them for the sum of thirty pieces of silver; after which he returned to the company of our Lord, concealing his

perfidious plan and awaiting an occasion to execute it.

Our Lord having finished his prayer in the Garden of Olives, went to waken his three disciples whom he had allowed to sleep for a little while, saying to them: "Arise now, you have slept enough. Behold the hour is come in which the Son of Man will be betrayed into the power of sinners. Behold the traitor who has sold me and will deliver me, approaches." Then he advanced boldly before them.

Judas, who marched at the head of a band of soldiers, of officers of justice, and servants, approaches our Lord and addresses him: "Hail, Rabbi! And he kissed him." (Matt. xxvi. 49.) Our Lord replied: "Friend, whereto art thou come?" (Ib. xxvi. 50.) Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke xxii. 48.) Here, behold the blackest malice, the most horrible perfidy ever on record, and which was to our Lord an atrocious injury.

First: because it was done to him by his disciple, his apostle whom he had singularly loved and honored, and to whom he had confided the alms he had received.

Secondly: because it was accomplished

with a kiss which is one of the most certain ways men have of expressing friendship.

Thirdly: because by a kiss it betrayed him and placed him in the power of his mortal enemies, who intended to subject him to the painful and ignominious death of the Cross.

But what did our Lord do? As Judas approached to kiss him, our Lord, who penetrated that disloyal heart and saw its wicked design, did not draw back nor turn aside his face, did not get angry and call him a traitor, a perfidious monster, or any other name worthy of his crime, but paused to await him, allowed him to come near, to touch and kiss him with his infamous and accursed lips, and with ineffable sweetness and unparalleled gentleness, said to him: "Friend, why art thou come? what brings thee here?" As though wishing to say: "Even while thou dost come to me as my mortal and most cruel enemy, I have for thee the heart and the affection of a true friend; I offer thee my friendship and my grace if thou wilt accept it; I present it to thee gladly; on my part, I desire thee to take it and use it for thy salvation."

And desiring to warn him of his sin charitably and sweetly, wishing to make him recognize it and then conceive regret for it, and

to ask and obtain its pardon, he said to him: "Judas, is it thus that thou dost betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" As though meaning to say: "Consider what it is thou art doing, what thou art undertaking. Reflect upon what I have done for thee, and what thou art doing against me; how since the time I took thee into my company, and made thee my apostle, I have, by my doctrine, my example, and my benefits, not ceased to do thee good! What evil have I ever done thee? And now thou betrayest me! And with a kiss, the sign of love, thou dost exercise toward me the most cruel hatred that was ever known! Thou dost deliver me to the fury of my enemies who will kill me!"

After this, the soldiers of all those agents of hell having power over our Lord, fell upon him like so many hungry wolves upon a gentle, innocent lamb, seized him, and bound him.

2. *The Virtues, Humility and Fear.*

A man abandoned by God is a fearful object. The atmosphere illumined by the sun at midday is not more different from the same atmosphere in the obscurity and darkness of midnight, than is a man in that state from the same man in the state of grace—whatever may

have been the degrees of grace, of light, of supernatural gifts, and of holiness to which he was raised, his fallen state is not less terrible on their account. Judas, the servant of our Lord, the familiar friend of Christ, honored by him with the high dignity of the apostleship, instructed by his lessons, loaded with his gifts, filled with his graces and working miracles, sells his Lord, his Benefactor, and his God! sells him for thirty pieces of silver! and after betraying him with a kiss! delivers him into the hands of his enemies! and thus commits the greatest crime that was ever perpetrated by man! from his high elevation falls into the profoundest depths of the abyss! Let the thought of this fill us with fear, let us humble ourselves, let us carefully watch over ourselves in even the smallest things, lest we fall. Judas did not reach his state by a first leap; he fell gradually, little by little; light faults led him on to graver, and these to the most horrible of all.

3. Prayer.

O good Jesus, my only liberator, who through an excess of kindness didst allow thyself to be taken and bound for me! I implore thee by the merits of thy bonds to break

the bonds of my sins, of my affection for creatures and for myself, and to bind me closely, to unite me inseparably to thee, so that I may never offend thee. O my Lord! how the treason of Judas, how the bargain he made of thee, and the kiss he gave thee, affright me! Hold me fast, bind me closely to thee, so that I cannot fall. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"The breath of our mouth, Christ the Lord, is taken in our sins." (Lam. iv. 20.) The breath of our mouth, our Lord Jesus Christ, has been taken in our sins, and our iniquities are the cords that were used to seize and bind him.

"He hath sold the just man for silver, and the poor man for a pair of shoes." (Amos ii. 6.) He hath lowered the just, the most exalted of the just, and the infinite Majesty of God to the value of silver, and hath sold the poor, Jesus Christ, at a vile price, the price of a pair of shoes! Alas! have you never sold our Lord for a vapor of honor, for a trifling gain, or for a shameful pleasure?

"Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss? (Luke xxii. 48.) To make an unworthy Communion is to give our Lord the

kiss of a traitor, the kiss of Judas. Will you become a second Judas? To make reparation in some sort, and as is in your power, for the outrageous and treacherous kiss of Judas, give our Lord in your Communions and in your devotions, kisses of faith, of reverence, adoration, offering of yourself, confidence, and love.

ONE O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ before Caiphas.

1. The Mystery.

The soldiers leading our Lord with great noise and loud shouts into the city of Jerusalem, brought him first to Annas, who after having feasted his eyes till they were satisfied on the agreeable spectacle, sent him still bound to his son-in-law Caiphas, who was the high-priest of that year. Caiphas having already had news of this capture which he had so long desired, had assembled in his house the priests, the scribes, and the ancients of the people; before these our Lord was presented, maliciously questioned, falsely accused, most unjustly condemned, and judged to be worthy of death as a wicked man, a villain, and a blasphemer; then his eyes were bandaged, the soldiers and servants gave him blows,

spat in his face, mocked him, and heaped on him all kinds of insults. "They blind-folded him, and smote his face. And they asked him, saying: 'Prophesy, who is it that struck thee?' And blaspheming, many other things they said against him." (Luke xxii. 64, 65.) "Then did they spit in his face, and buffet him, and others struck his face with the palms of their hands." (Matt. xxvi. 67.)

2. The Virtues of the Mystery.

Represent to yourself the modesty, the meekness, the patience, the silence, and humility of our Lord, under those false accusations, those iniquitous judgments, that condemnation to death, and all those outrages; and remember he is your model. Can you profess to be the disciple of such a Master, you who are so delicate, so sensitive to the least thing that is done or said against you, and offends ever so slightly your honor, or your pleasure and interest?

3. Prayer.

O perfect Mirror of patience and humility! I pray thee by the merit of the virtues thou

didst exercise before Caiphas, to give me the grace to imitate them when I have occasion, and to profit by thy example. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"Unjust witnesses rising up, have asked me things I knew not." (Ps. xxxiv. 11.) They brought false witnesses against me who accused me of crimes I had never thought of; and they asked me things I had no knowledge of.

"When the sinner stood against me I was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things." (Ps. xxxviii. 2, 3.) When the sinner accused me falsely, and endeavored to defame my innocence with his calumnies, I replied nothing; he said to me most sharp and humiliating things, and although I might have replied much to justify myself, I spoke not a word.

"Jesus held his peace." (Matt. xxvi. 63.) Jesus through all his persecutions kept silence, even when he was urged to reply.

TWO O'CLOCK.

JEUSS CHRIST ABANDONED BY HIS APOSTLES AND DENIED BY ST. PETER.

1. The Mystery.

The disciples seeing our Lord seized, all abandoned him and fled. "The disciples all leaving him, fled." (Matt. xxvi. 56.) St. Peter is more prominent in this mystery because he denied our Lord three times in the house of Caiphas; at the question of a servant he swore not only that he was not one of his disciples, but that he did not even know him. "He denied with an oath: That I know not the man." (Matt. xxvi. 72.) "He began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom you speak." (Mark xiv. 71.)

2. The Virtues of the Mystery.

Humility, fear, mistrust of self, and flight of occasions of sin.

Who will not fear and mistrust his strength, seeing the apostles so weak, and on so important an occasion, when it was necessary, if ever, to show courage and fidelity? They abandoned their Master like cowards, after having spent three years in his company,

after having heard such holy instructions, seen so many miracles, received so many graces, and after having quite recently communicated and been strengthened with our Lord's body and blood given to them by his own hands.

Who will not fear still more at seeing St. Peter, Christ's first minister and chief apostle, who from the benefits and favors he had received was under even greater obligations of fidelity than the others, who had promised so solemnly that he would be faithful, though all the rest should deny their Lord—at seeing him deny that same Lord three times, and not in simple language, but with an oath, with horrible imprecations and curses—and not at the threat of a severe judge, or of an armed soldier holding a sword over his neck, but at the voice of a miserable servant-maid? O wonderful weakness! O extreme frailty of man! Alas! if the pillars of the Church fall so lamentably, what will become of feeble reeds? If giants are thus overthrown, how can little children stand without a most special grace from our Lord? Therefore we must ask for this grace constantly and earnestly.

So long as St. Peter was with our Lord he did not fall; soon as he left him, behold him in the dust. "Thou turnedst away thy face

from me, and I became troubled" (Ps. xxix. 8), said David. Thou didst turn thy face from me so that I no longer saw thee, and at the same moment I felt my spirit troubled and my strength failing. Let us keep ourselves close to Jesus Christ and look upon him constantly, so that he may always preserve us.

The principal cause of Peter's fall was his confidence in himself, and the good opinion he had of his own strength. What will preserve us will be our consciousness of our extreme weakness, which will produce in us fear and mistrust of ourselves.

3. Prayer.

O Jesus, Saviour of men, my sole Help, and my only Support! I implore thee to hold me fast, for without thee it is impossible for me to stand an instant. Make me see myself, show me my absolute powerlessness for all good without thy grace, so that I may be afraid of myself, that I may not rest upon myself, but may mistrust my own strength, and may be humble. I conjure thee to look upon me with the eyes of thy mercy, as thou didst look upon St. Peter, so that like him I may conceive a true regret for my sins, and may weep for them all the rest of my life. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"Lo! thou trustest upon this broken staff of a reed." (Is. xxxvi. 6.) Leaning upon thyself, thou dost lean upon a reed.

"He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x. 12.) He that thinketh to stand and be firm, let him take care lest he fall, seeing that the apostles, and the chief and most resolute among them, fell so heavily.

"Blessed is the man that is always fearful." (Prov. xxviii. 14.) Blessed is the man who is always fearful of himself. And who would not be fearful considering such falls?

THREE O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ before Pilate.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord having passed the entire night in sufferings, the morning being come, the Jews led him bound and in the guise of a criminal to Pilate who was the administrator of justice for the Romans. In presence of Pilate they charged him with several crimes, but especially with two: the first, that he was a disturber of the public peace, who excited the

people to sedition by calling himself the Son of God; the second, that he refused to pay tribute to Cæsar, arrogating to himself the quality of King. Thus they pretended he was a criminal against religion and against the State, and made him guilty of high-treason alike in the divine and human order.

The Jews made these accusations against him with extreme violence and furious passion, and he replied not a single word to justify himself, at which the judge was greatly astonished, and urged him to speak in his own defence; but still our meek Saviour kept silence. "He answered him not to any word, so that the governor wondered exceedingly." (Matt. xxvii. 14.) "But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate wondered." (Mark xv. 5.) Pilate questioned him about his royalty and his kingdom, and asked him if he were a king. Our Lord replied: "Yes, I am, but my kingdom is not of this world." (Jno. xviii. 36.)

2. *The Virtues.*

They are patience, silence, and fortitude under false accusations and calumnies.

Our Lord gives us an admirable example of their practice on an occasion so urgent,

when he was accused so falsely and could so easily have justified himself. "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth." (Is. liii. 7.) Being thus pursued and led to death, he will act like a gentle sheep; and like a lamb that is sheared, he will not open his mouth.

Examine what is your state in regard to these virtues, notice what emotions you experience when you are accused, when some bad report is made of you, when your honor is attacked; and profit by what our Lord endures for love of you, and from the example he gives you.

Endeavor to penetrate the meaning, the sublimity, and the fulfillment of these words of our Lord: "My kingdom is not of this world." My power, my glory, my riches, are not on earth. My subjects are inhabitants of a world other than this wherein they do not form their plans nor found their hopes of happiness. Speaking of them to his Father, our Lord says twice: "They are not of the world." (Jno. xvii. 14.) And speaking to them in the persons of his apostles who represent them all, he says: "You are not of the world." (Jno. xv. 19.) You are not in-

habitants of this world nor people of this earth, but of Heaven.

Be, then, of that kingdom, and consequently consider yourself in this world as a pilgrim so as not to fix your affections upon it. And in your poverty and all your privations, console yourself with the thought that you are only a stranger here.

3. Prayer.

O my Lord! grant me the grace not to be a citizen of this world, as thou dost understand it; and as a sign, not to excuse nor defend myself when I shall be blamed or accused either justly or wrongfully; that I may imitate thee, O my divine Exemplar, who being so falsely and dangerously accused before Pilate, preferred to be silent rather than justify thyself; and that I may suffer this humiliation courageously for love of thee. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"In silence and in hope shall your strength be." (Is. xxx. 15.) Your strength when you are accused and calumniated, shall be in keeping silence and hoping in God.

"Thy kingdom come." (Matt. vi. 10.) May thy kingdom, the kingdom of thy grace and glory, come to us.

FOUR O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ before Herod.

1. The Mystery.

Pilate having learned that our Lord was a Galilean, sent him to Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee (who had come to Jerusalem, as well as the other Jews, for the feast), as being his legitimate subject.

This prince, who was very wicked, and guilty of the death of St. John the Baptist, and corrupted by infamous pleasures, was glad to see our Lord whom he had long desired to meet, hoping he would work some miracle in his presence. But so far from being willing to satisfy this vicious and curious man and thus gain some consideration from him, our Lord would not even answer a single word to the many questions Herod asked him. "He answered him nothing." (Luke xxiii. 9.) Neither would he utter a syllable in denial of the crimes the Jews with stubborn hatred and rage, kept on urging against him. So Herod, losing his esteem for him, joined with the cour-

tiers in contemning him, and as a mark of scorn, and a sign that he took him for a fool and an idiot who had not sense enough to speak, had a beautiful white robe put on him as if he were a person of rank, and then mocked him. After this he sent him back to Pilate. "He mocked him, putting on him a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate." (Ib. xxiii. 11.)

2. The Virtue.

It is to suffer meekly after our Lord's example, contempt that may be shown you for your mind, your judgment, your knowledge and your talents, remembering that our Lord, the uncreated and incarnate Word in whom are contained, as St. Paul says (Col. ii. 3), all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, was treated as an idiot and a fool.

It is also not to desire, nor seek, nor procure in any way, the reputation of being a person of intelligence, possessed of good judgment, wise, learned, skillful, and industrious, but to renounce all such desires of reputation and esteem; and to believe that without contradiction he has the best spirit who has the spirit of God, which consists in humility, simplicity, innocence, holiness, and elevation

above the things of earth, recalling how our Lord said to his Father: "I praise and bless thee because thou hast hidden thy mysteries and secrets from the prudent and wise of the world, and hast discovered them to the little and humble."

3. Prayer.

O Word of the Father and Eternal Wisdom, who keeping silence before Herod wast taken by him for a fool! grant me the grace to understand in what a good mind and judgment truly consist, to contemn the false wisdom of the world, and to highly esteem and embrace with all my heart thy wise folly, and clothe myself with its precious garments which are humility, simplicity, and innocence. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn. The lamp despised in the thoughts of the rich, is ready for the time appointed." (Job. xii. 4, 5.)

The simplicity of the just is derided, it passes for an extinguished lamp in the opinions of rich worldlings; but it will not be always thus, it will give light at its appointed time.

"I am become a laughing-stock all day; all scoff at me." (Jer. xx. 7.) I have served as a subject for ridicule all the day long; they all have mocked me.

FIVE O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ again before Pilate, and Esteemed less than Barabbas.

1. The Mystery.

Pilate seeing our Lord brought back to him, told the Jews that they might know very well he was innocent since neither he himself, nor Herod, had found him guilty of any crime deserving death; and as he must, according to custom, release a prisoner for the feast of the Passover, he would give them their king, would set him at liberty. The Jews immediately cried out that they did not want him, and demanded Barabbas, a famous criminal, who in a riot had committed murder. After a great deal of contesting on both sides, Pilate desiring to deliver our Lord, and the Jews refusing to receive him, Pilate finally granted them Barabbas.

2. The Virtue.

It is to conduct yourself as a true disciple of Jesus Christ when in questions of preference

and precedence, others are placed before you; when more account is made of your equals and even of your inferiors than of you, and offices and charges are conferred upon them which you would be much more capable of filling; when they are put forward and you are kept back; when they are talked of, and not a word is said about you; when all they do is approved and praised, and some fault is found with all you do.

In these trials of your virtue and perfection, think of the Incarnate Wisdom, the Sanctity of our Lord, and how with horrible contempt, with extreme injustice and fearful blindness, Barabbas, an infamous robber and notorious murderer, was preferred to him.

3. Prayer.

O my sovereign Lord, who didst teach that if we would be exalted, we must humble ourselves, and that to be great we must become the least of all! (Matt. xxiii. 12; Luke xxii. 26.) I beg thee by the merit of thy abasement below Barabbas, that, when in any manner I am less preferred than others, I may conduct myself with the patience, silence, and humility, necessary to make me thy imitator and thy disciple. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"To whom have you likened God?" (Is. xl. 18.) "To whom have you likened me, or made me equal, saith the Holy One?" (Ib. xl. 25.) "To whom have you likened me, and made me equal, and compared me, and made me like?" (Ib. xlvi. 5.) To whom have you likened God? Is there anything that is not infinitely below him? To whom have you compared me and made me equal, saith the Holy One, the Infinite Sanctity? you have made me equal to Barabbas, you have even esteemed me less than him.

"Death shall be chosen rather than life by all that shall remain of the wicked kindred in all places." (Jer. viii. 3.) All those that shall remain of that most wicked race, shall choose death rather than life, a homicide rather than the Saviour.

SIX O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ Taken and Scourged.

1. The Mystery.

Pilate, seeing that the Jews were eager for the death of our Lord, to satisfy them and in some degree appease their fury, condemned him to the scourge.

This punishment caused our Lord extreme suffering: first; by reason of his very delicate and sensitive constitution; secondly; on account of the cruelty of the instruments used, which were, it is said, of three kinds—cords armed at the ends with little bones shaped like stars, cords made of ox hides, and rods covered with thorns; thirdly; from the prodigious number of blows he received, which, it is believed, amounted to five thousand.

Our Lord endured this horrible and long torture without complaining, without murmuring, and without manifesting the least sign of irritation; but, on the contrary, with meekness, tranquility, and invincible patience, thinking meanwhile of you, and offering to God his Father those streams of blood that were drawn from his torn body, for the pardon of your sins.

2. The Virtue.

It is mortification of the flesh, which consists in performing corporal penances with courage accompanied by discretion; in not dreading so much bodily pains and discomforts, and not taking such care to avoid them; in not being so eager and active when we do suffer them, to get rid of them, but in bearing

them with a patient and calm spirit, in imitation of our Lord, and for the sake of enduring something for his love, to offer him in some degree suffering for suffering, and to expiate the disorders of our senses and the sins committed by our flesh.

Behold how rigorously our Lord treated his flesh which was most pure, most innocent and holy, and learn how you should act toward yours which is full of corruption, and has caused you to commit so many faults. You should regard it as the enemy of your salvation, as a domestic thief, as a furnace of wickedness, a principle of irregularity, a source of corruption, a vestment of ignorance, and a dark veil that hinders you from perceiving and tasting the things of God, and you should govern it as the slave of the dwelling, which it is, and should train it to its duty.

3. Prayer.

O my dear Saviour, who wast willing that thy most sacred body and thy virginal flesh should be torn with whips for my salvation! I beg thee to apply to my flesh the merit of that precious blood thou didst shed to expiate the disorders of my senses, and to wash out all the sins of which they ever have been

the instruments. I implore thee to purify my senses, to sanctify my body, and to grant that it may no longer be an obstacle, but rather a means and an aid to my salvation and perfection. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences." (Gal. v. 24.) Those that belong to Jesus Christ, and are his true disciples, have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences.

"Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies." (II Cor. iv. 10.) Let us practice and bear about continually the mortification of Jesus in our bodies, so that they may reflect his life.

SEVEN O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ Crowned with Thorns and Outraged in Several Other Ways.

1. The Mystery.

Pilate understanding that the enraged Jews were not satisfied with the cruel punishment he had just condemned our Lord to suffer, were not satiated with the quantity of blood

the scourges had drawn from him, but desired his last drop, to appease still more their diabolical animosity, abandoned him to the soldiers who, calling all their comrades at the time on duty, crowded around him like so many wolves about an innocent lamb, and began to laugh at and mock him whom the angels adore and salute as the King of kings and the Creator of the universe. Each tried to find words more insulting to address him, acts more outrageous to inflict on him.

They first despoiled him of his garment, and this not without tearing off the skin in several places, because the blood he had just shed in such abundance had dried the garment to the skin; then they threw over his shoulders a miserable old cloak of faded purple, and placed on his head a crown woven of very sharp thorns, pressing it down so that the points pierced his brows, causing him inexpressible suffering; and for a sceptre they put a reed in his right hand, thus making him a comedy king, to signify that he was a fantastic and ridiculous sovereign, and that his royalty was like thorns and reeds, satirical, void, and useless.

"And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: 'Hail, king of the

Jews.' And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head." (Matt. xxvii. 29, 30.) Having thus arrayed him, they knelt before him as though in adulation; then bursting into shouts of laughter, exclaimed: "All hail, King of the Jews!" at the same time spitting in his face, and striking him on the head with the reed, each blow renewing and increasing the torture of his crown.

2. *The Virtue.*

Our Lord manifested in his endurance of all these sufferings and insults, an invincible patience, made more resplendent by a singular meekness and a wondrous submission in permitting them to do with him whatever they would, never complaining, murmuring, or expressing any emotion. They pressed the thorns into his brows, and he said not a word; they presented him a reed for a sceptre to mock him, and he did not refuse it, did not draw back his hand indignantly, as our corrupt natures would have done; but he took it in his blessed hand, and grasped it with reverence and love, as the cherished instrument of his opprobrium. Oh! what a model of patience, and how admirably does such an example instruct us in that virtue!

Patience is what is most necessary in sufferings and adversities; it is a virtue of which we have extreme need by reason of the miseries with which this life is filled; it consists in not permitting the understanding to conceive any thought, the will to produce any emotion, the tongue to utter any word, nor the whole person that suffers, to manifest any sign of impetuosity, impatience, indignation, or vexation, as though unwilling to suffer, but to receive and bear the suffering peacefully and with a quiet spirit.

Thus Tertullian describing patience and painting it in his own colors, says: "It has a countenance mild and tranquil, a brow serene and unfurrowed by any wrinkle made by sadness or anger, lips sealed with the seal of a wise and honorable silence, and a complexion such as we see in persons who are innocent and confiding." (Tert. l. de Patient. c. 15.)

You should undertake with great care the acquisition of this virtue, without which you cannot acquire the others, inasmuch as they cannot be gained without trouble; whence St. Gregory said that a man shows himself as much less virtuous as he is less patient.

3. Prayer.

O King of glory, who for love of me didst suffer so patiently so many indignities and so much infamy! give me the spirit of thy patience to bear contempt and opprobrium. Sanctify by the merit of thy crown of thorns that so terribly afflicted thy brows, all my thorns and my afflictions, and purify my mind and my spirit from all bad thoughts; and as I am of myself only a feeble reed, light and inconstant, take me in thy holy and powerful hand to strengthen me, to establish and defend me. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"Let us examine him by outrages and tortures, that we may know his meekness and try his patience." (Wis. ii. 19.) Let us sound him with outrages and torments to see how deep is his equanimity and patience.

"I do not resist; I have not gone back. I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me, and spit upon me." (Is. l. 5, 6.) I have given my body to be beaten and torn with scourges, and my cheeks to those that

buffeted them and plucked out my beard; I have not turned away my face when they wished to insult it and cover it with spittle; I have not refused to suffer all these outrages, I have not drawn back to avoid them.

"For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face." (Ps. lxviii. 8.) I have received insults, I have borne opprobrium, and my face has been covered with confusion for my love for thee. Consider what thou art willing to do for me.

EIGHT O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ Presented to the People.

1. The Mystery.

Pilate having the secret desire to deliver our Lord because he believed him innocent, and because his wife had intimidated him by a relation of certain visions she had had in the night, and wishing to prevail upon the Jews to let him go, gave them for that purpose a spectacle capable of moving to compassion the most cruel hearts, of softening tigers. It was this:

He took our Lord whose body was naked, torn, and covered with blood, whose face was disfigured, livid, swollen from the blows, soiled

with spittle, scratched by the thorns, whose eyes were bruised and half dimmed, whose hair and beard were plucked out, and with his wrists tied, the crown of thorns on his head, the reed in his hand, and the purple cloak of scorn on his shoulders, he led him to the steps of his palace, and showed him in this condition to the people, saying: *Ecce homo!*—Behold the man!

As if meaning to say: Behold this man against whom you are so exasperated, and of whom you are afraid; see in what a state he is. You accuse him of calling himself the Son of God, and of having designed to be your king. Be assured that far from bearing any mark of divinity, he must be considered the vilest and most miserable of all men; and as to his being a king, look what a crown, what a sceptre, and what purple he wears! He need not excite your fear, but rather your pity.

2. *The Spirit of the Mystery.*

It is to make a good use of Jesus Christ, and to remember these remarkable words of the holy old man Simeon, when he held him in his arms: "Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many."

(Luke ii. 34.) Behold this child will be to many the occasion of their fall and damnation, and to many others the cause of their salvation; and this will be according to the use they make of him.

As Pilate presenting our Lord to the Jews said to them with his own meaning: "*Behold the man!* so persuade yourself that God the Father presents him to each one of us, saying with *his* meaning: *Ecce homo! Behold the man!* Look at this man who is not only a man, but also the true God, my only Son by nature, born of my substance, and whom I love infinitely.

Behold the man! Behold my well-beloved Son! I have been willing that he should become man for thee, that he should endure all sorts of evils for thy salvation. See in him the love I bear thee, my esteem for thy soul, the malice of sin, my hatred of it, and the chatisement I inflict upon it, and then judge from this how thou shouldst love me, and the service thou shouldst render me; how thou shouldst hate sin, how avoid it; and if thou committest it what reason thou hast to fear my justice.

Behold the man! This Man-God whom I give thee to be thy Saviour, thy Redeemer,

thy Mediator, thy Protector, thy Exemplar, thy wisdom, thy strength, thy hope, and thy all.

You ought also to say to yourself: My soul, *behold the man!* the Man-God in whom thou must believe, hope, and trust, whom thou must honor, adore, and love above all things.

3. Prayer.

O new Adam and Chief of all the Elect! who wast pleased to appear so deformed and hideous that none could recognize thee, and they took thee for a leper, or a monster rather than a man, in order to make me see to what a state I have by my sins reduced the image of God engraven within me, and how hideously I have disfigured it, and how thou, the first, the essential and personal Image of God, didst come here below to repair it and restore it to its beauty. Grant that I may efface the image of Adam that is within me, whose features are sins, vices, and imperfections, to replace it by, and to bear always, thy image, which is the representation of charity, patience, gentleness, and all virtues. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"We have seen him, and there was no sightliness; despised and the most abject of

men, a man of sorrows; and we thonght him as it were a leper." (Is. liii. 2, 3, 4.) We saw him, and he appeared to us so changed and so mutilated that we could not recognize him; an object of extreme scorn, the lowest of men, a man subject to every affliction; and we took him for a leper.

"Look on the face of thy Christ." (Ps. lxxxiii. 10.) God the Father bids us: Look on the face of Christ thy Saviour, to make of it, as thou ought, the means of grace and salvation.

And let us address the same words to God the Father in all our needs: Eternal Father, look upon the face of thy Son Jesus Christ, to pardon our sins, to give us strength to conquer our passions, to practice virtues, and following in his footsteps to reach the perfection to which thou dost call us, and to aid us in all our necessities. Amen.

NINE O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ Condemned to the Death of the Cross.

1. The Mystery.

Pilate having tried to save our Lord and to appease the hatred the Jews had conceived against him, they, instead of being melted to

some sentiments of humanity, cried out: "*Crucifigatur*,"—let him be crucified! But what evil has he done that he should be crucified, asked Pilate. They, unwilling to listen to any reason, only redoubled their cries: Let him be crucified. But I find nothing in him worthy of death, continued the governor. Do you wish me to crucify an innocent person? To this, they only cried the more. "They were instant with loud voices requiring that he might be crucified; and their voices prevailed." (Luke xxiii. 23.)

Then Pilate convinced that he could make no impression on their enraged spirits, had water brought and washed his hands before them, saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. Look you to it. And the whole people answering, said: His blood be upon us and upon our children." All the people replied contemptuously: Yes, yes, we care nothing about that; we are content that the chastisement of his blood fall on us and on our children; but we are not afraid of it, for he is only a rogue and a scoundrel.

Pilate, however, having not yet quite lost all hope, made a last attempt, showing them our Lord in the state we have described, a sight that might have melted even hearts of

stone, saying: "*Behold the man!*" But their furious voices only shouted louder than ever: "*Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum!*" Away with him, crucify him! Take this man away from before our eyes, we no longer want to see him except on a gibbet; let him die, the wretch, the rebel, the cheat, the blasphemer, the profaner! Crucify him, crucify him! Then the iniquitous judge, betraying the cause of the innocent, outraging justice, yielding as a coward to human respect, abandoned our Lord to the rage of the Jews to be crucified.

2. *The Spirit of the Mystery.*

It is to learn how far in sin souls abandoned by God, go—even to refusing, to scorning, to hating, and holding in horror and execration, their Saviour, their Redeemer, the remedy for all their ills and the source of all their blessings. What blindness! What perversity!

It is to see the untold injury that human respect does to the salvation of a soul, since it caused Pilate to condemn to death innocence itself. And even now there are those who daily condemn Jesus Christ to death and commit grievous sins through cowardly human

respect, in order not to displease, not to offend, and for other temporal considerations that ought to be generously trampled under foot.

3. Prayer.

O sweet Jesus! with still more affection, more zeal, and more respect, I wish to possess thee, I acknowledge thee as the only Son of God, as my Lord and my Saviour; I believe in thee, I hope in thee, and I intend to love thee still more than the Jews held thee in hatred and contempt, who did so to the degree of not wanting thee and of even looking upon thee with horror. I ask thee, I supplicate thee that thy blood may not fall upon me as upon the Jews, to condemn me, but to absolve me; not to stain me, but to wash me; not to lose me, but to save me. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verse.

You should make the celebrated confession of St. Peter: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. xvi. 16.)

You should repeat these words in opposition to the perverse sentiments of the Jews, with faith, reverence, devotion, hope, and love.

TEN O'CLOCK.

JESUS CHRIST BEARING HIS CROSS, GOES TO CALVARY.

1. The Mystery.

In execution of the sentence of death, our Lord was taken by the soldiers, his mantle of ridicule was torn off causing him new suffering, and he was clothed in his own garments; then loaded with the cross to which he was to be nailed, he was led outside the city to the place of his sacrifice which was the hill of Calvary. And for fear lest, being worn out and weakened by the tortures he had undergone and the loss of so much blood, and from having neither eaten, drunk, nor slept since the preceding day, he might fail under the weight of his heavy burden and lose the rest of his strength, and perhaps die, they forced a man named Simon, a native of the city of Cyrene, to help him carry it; but this was not through any pity they felt for him, but to reserve him for the last torture.

He was followed on this sad journey by a vast multitude of persons, and among others by several devout women, who through compassion for his sufferings lamented bitterly, shedding floods of tears. Our Lord turning

toward them, said to them: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children; for if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 28.) Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not so much for me as for yourselves and your children; for if they treat the wood that is alive so rudely, what will they do to the dead wood? If the fire so greedily seizes the green wood, how will it take hold of the dry?

2. *The Spirit of the Mystery.*

You should regard attentively our Lord going from Pilate's palace to Calvary, which was outside the city, bearing on his shoulders the wood of his cross, and in that cross all your sins and all the punishment they deserve, with which he charged himself in order to relieve you, although they were so heavy that they weighed him down, and were to cause his death.

What compassion you should have for him seeing him walking through the streets, toiling and moaning beneath the insupportable burden of your sins, and thus going to death! What gratitude ought you to render him for such a benefit, what love for such great love!

But will you not aid him in his travail, will you not lighten the weight of his cross? The way is, since your sins make it heavy, to have a lively sorrow for them, and to change your life.

3. Prayer.

O innocent Isaac, dear and amiable Saviour, who loaded with the wood of thy sacrifice, didst go to death like a gentle lamb! listen, I beseech thee, to my humble prayer to be allowed to bear after thee, like Simon the Cyrenean, the figure of thy elect, the cross thou hast destined for me; and to bear it with thee in thy patience, thy strength, thy humility, thy gentleness, thy love, and in all thy virtues. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him." (Cant. iii. 11.)

Daughters of Sion, pious souls, go forth from yourselves, from the sentiments of the flesh, and see with the eyes of the spirit the peaceful king Solomon crowned with the crown of thorns, which his cruel mother, the Syna-

gogue, and still more your sins, placed on his head, see him going to death for you; and accompany him with faith, respect, love, compassion, regret for your sins, and a determined resolution to lead a better life. Otherwise, expect the fulfillment of these words which you ought to meditate and frequently repeat: "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 31.)

If such extreme severity is exercised toward the green wood which is worthy of being preserved, what will be done with the dry wood, which is good for nothing but to burn? If God punishes so fearfully his only and most innocent Son for the sins of his rebellious slave, how will he punish the slave himself if he does not reform?

ELEVEN O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ put to Death between two Thieves.

1. The Mystery.

Two criminals were brought out of the city with our Lord to be crucified with him; one was crucified on his right hand, and the other on his left. (Luke xxiii. 32, 33.)

2. The Spirit of the Mystery.

It is to admire, adore, and fear the abysses of God's judgments, and to take great care to live well.

Two robbers, one as guilty as the other, were condemned to the same kind of death, on the same day and in the same place. One was taken, and the other left! (Matt. xxiv. 40.) One was predestined, the other rejected; one saved, the other lost; one went from his cross to paradise, the other descended from his to hell.

These two thieves, figures of the predestinate and the reprobate, were both on the cross and suffered extreme torments; but the bad one suffered even more than the good, because besides the tortures of the body, he had also to endure those of the soul, impatience, spite, fury, rage, hatred, the desire of vengeance, and his other wicked sentiments; whilst, if the good one was tormented in body, his soul bore his torments patiently, he endured them as a satisfaction for his sins which he deeply regretted, and he was cheered by the hope of his salvation.

The history of these two men teaches us that all, the good and the bad, are afflicted in

this life, the bad even more than the good; and also, that all we have to do is to accept our afflictions in a good spirit, because an affliction well received, a cross well carried, is, as it was to the good thief, a token of predestination and a cause of a thousand blessings; on the contrary, badly received and borne, as in the case of the bad thief, it is a sign of reprobation, and a source of an infinity of evils.

3. Prayer.

O God whose judgments are abysses! show me grace and mercy, look upon me favorably as thou didst look upon the good thief, so that like him I may have strength to be entirely converted, to bear my sufferings and hang upon my cross as he did, and also like him to ascend from the cross to paradise. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verse.

"Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom." (Luke xxiii. 42.) Ah! Lord, remember me when thou shalt be in thy kingdom; and as thou art already there, remember me now to forgive my sins and show me mercy.

MIDDAY.

Jesus Christ on the Cross.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord was nailed to the cross with inexplicable torture, and then elevated and exposed with extreme infamy to the gaze of a great multitude of spectators, who continuing their hatred and cruelty, and delighted to see him where they had so much desired him to be, vomited forth against him blasphemies and outrageous words, and shaking their heads in mockery and disdain, exclaimed: Go to, wicked wretch! who boasted to be able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days, now use your power for yourself, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, prove it by coming down from the cross. He saved others, and he knows not how to save himself! If he is, as he has pretended, the king of Israel whom we await, let him come down from his cross and we will believe in him and receive him. He has put his trust in God, let God now deliver him if he owns him for his Son. "They blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying: Vah! thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days

dost rebuild it, save thy own self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him now deliver him if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God. (Matt. xxvii. 39, 40, 42, 43.)

While our Lord was plunged and submerged in that most bitter sea of agonies, to sustain him in some degree they offered him a glass of myrrh mingled with gall; but he would only taste it to experience its bitterness; and would not drink it to mitigate his sufferings, as other victims of the cross were accustomed to do, to whom this mixture was given as a narcotic to stupefy and deaden their senses, so that they would not feel their tortures so acutely.

2. *The Spirit of the Mystery.*

It is to regard with close application of spirit our Lord crucified; to look at him with faith, believing that he is your Creator and your Sovereign Lord; with extreme regret for your sins that have brought him to this state and have cost him so much suffering after he has bestowed on you so many bles-

sings ; with great hope of obtaining pardon, since he suffers to give it to you and pours out his blood to wash you ; with ardent love, considering what he does and endures for you, what he gives you, and how lovingly he gives ; and finally with great fear of being severely punished if you do not correspond to such excessive love, and if you do not make a good use of so precious a means of salvation.

You must unite yourself to our Lord crucified, and apply yourself above all to the mystery of his cross, because it is the mystery of the predestination, the justification, sanctification, and salvation of men—in fact, the means whereby our Lord has predestined, justified, sanctified, and saved them. It was there, on the cross, that he purchased them, that he paid their ransom and discharged their debts ; it was there that he conquered sin, the devil, death, and all their enemies ; there he closed the gates of hell and opened the doors of paradise ; and there he merited for them grace, glory, and all the blessings they will ever enjoy.

Finally, you should apply yourself to the mystery of the cross with the resolution of imitating the humility, patience, obedience, charity, and other virtues our Lord there ex-

ercised, and there taught us; remembering that he exercised and taught them for the express purpose that you should imitate them, and that you cannot in any other way unite yourself to him crucified and receive the fruits of his cross.

3. Prayer.

O Jesus, my Saviour and my Redeemer! grant me this grace which I beg of thee with my whole heart; that, as all the members of thy body were fastened to the cross, and as I have the honor, unworthy though I am, to be one of the members of thy mystical body, it may please thee to attach me to thy cross, to render me a recipient of its merits, and to give me its true spirit to enable me to live the rest of my days as a man crucified with thee, practicing the humility, patience, gentleness, obedience, charity, forgiveness of injuries, poverty of spirit as well as of body, and all the other virtues thou didst there exemplify. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." (Zach. xii. 10.) Those who have crucified me shall behold me on the cross where they have placed me, and shall stay

their gaze to consider what I suffer, for whom, and with what love.

"With Christ I am nailed to the cross." (Gal. ii. 19.) I am nailed to the cross with Jesus Christ as one of his members that shares the affliction of his head.

"The world is crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. vi. 14.) We are dead, the one to the other.

ONE O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ Speaking on the Cross.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord on the cross spoke seven words which were heard; doubtless he spoke others which were not heard; it is believed that he recited the twenty-first Psalm which clearly refers to his passion.

I.

The first word our Lord spoke on the cross is redolent of most admirable charity, because it had for its object those who had crucified him. He asked his Father to pardon them, saying: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" (Luke xxiii. 34.)

He included in this prayer not only those of the Jewish and Roman people who had

crucified him, but us, and all men, because we have all fastened him to the cross with the nails of our sins.

Let us learn from such an example love of our enemies and the forgiveness of injuries.

O my Saviour, say once more to thy Father, there in highest Heaven, say now and always for me and for all men: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

II.

The second word was to promise paradise to the good thief, telling him: "*Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.*" (Luke xxiii. 43.) I tell thee and I assure thee that to-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.

Who would not hope in our Lord after such a pardon and such a grace? Thus the Church sings:

"*Qui Mariam absolvisti,*
Et latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti."

"Thou didst Mary's guilt forgive,
Didst the dying thief receive;
Hence doth hope within me live."

III.

The third word was to give to his most blessed and most afflicted Mother, Saint John

for her son, saying: "*Woman, behold thy son.*" (Jno. xix. 26.)

Thou art losing the Son thou broughtest forth. I give thee another, my most cherished disciple, to assist thee and take care of thee.

And to St. John he said: "*Behold thy Mother.*" (Jno. xix. 27.) My Mother shall henceforth be thine.

O my Saviour, since thou art kind enough to allow me to apply these words to myself, I pray thee that, as I do not doubt thy holy Mother exercises toward me all the care and charity of a good and tender mother, so I may render her all the duties of honor, obedience, and love a good son owes his mother.

IV.

The fourth word was to cry out to his Father in the extremity of his agony: "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Mark xv. 34.)

My God, my God, why hast thou thus abandoned me? Why dost thou allow thy Son to suffer so much?

Who would not feel compassion for our Lord, hearing him utter this mournful cry, and at the same time experience deep sorrow

for sin, since it has reduced the Son of God to this extremity?

V.

The fifth word was: "*Sitio, I thirst.*" (Jno. xix. 28.) Yes, I thirst, but rather to suffer more for the love of men than to drink some liquid to refresh my body.

See the ardor of our Lord's love for you! Had he not suffering enough without desiring more to testify his love for you? Correspond, then, to that burning love, and suffer something for him.

VI.

The sixth word was: "*Consummatum est, It is cousummated.*" (Jno. xix. 30.) I undertook an affair for the glory of God and the salvation of men; I have not left it in an imperfect state; behold it is finished.

Do the same with regard to all your actions so that you can say with our Lord: *Consummatum est*, the thing is consummated, and as entirely as possible.

VII.

The last word was to say to God his Father: "*Father, into thy hands I commend my*

spirit. And saying this, he gave up the ghost." (Luke xxiii. 46.)

After his example, say frequently these words: "Father, I commend to thee my spirit, and I place it in thy paternal hands for thee to guide it, defend it, illumine it, strengthen it, purify it, and at its departure from my body, open to it the gates of thy paradise and reunite it to thee as to its first principle. Amen.

TWO O'CLOCK.

Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lady stood near the cross of her crucified Son. "There stood by the cross of Jesus, his Mother." (Jno. xix. 25.) There is no tongue that can express, nor mind capable of conceiving the greatness of the affliction and the excess of the sorrow that filled the soul of that most desolate of mothers at the foot of the cross of her Son; because her affliction and sorrow flowed from two sources, the vastness of which can neither be understood nor described; these sources were, the sufferings of her Son and the love she bore him. Thus her grief is beyond our thoughts and

words; it is that sword not of iron, nor of steel, but of sorrow, which the holy old man Simeon had predicted would pierce her heart.

2. The Spirit of the Mystery.

It is to stand, not to fall, beneath the greatest trials and the most bitter griefs, to bear them with patience and fortitude after the example of our Lady, who, in the extremity of her affliction and when that sword of sorrow was plunged in her soul even to the hilt, was not conquered by her suffering nor cast to the earth, but *stood* at the foot of the cross, where, as St. Anselm says: "She poured out her tears and was immersed in a sea of sorrow, but she remained constant and suffered with invincible patience; she stood gracefully, modestly, and with a confusion full of strength and wisdom." She stood, ever resigned to the will of God for the death of her Son, whom she would herself have crucified, so the saints say, if it had been necessary for God's glory and the salvation of men, since she had no less obedience, and no less courage to sacrifice her Son, than Abraham had to immolate his.

The spirit of this mystery is, moreover, to recognize that we owe compensation to our

Lady for the death of her Son; for, as our sins put him to death, we have not only offended him, but also his Mother, and are under obligation to repair the wrong we have done her, just as in human society reparation must be made to a parent for the murder of its child.

We ought, then, in compensation, to at least share the sorrow of that desolate Mother, to compassionate her, to have a trne repentance for our sins and the atrocious injury they have done her, to most humbly beg her forgiveness, to offer her a thousand thanksgivings for having contributed to our salvation by the sacrifice of her Son, and to promise that we will love her and her Son more than ever. This last is the satisfaction and reparation she asks of us; for her most ardent desire, the greatest pleasure that we can give her, is that we should honor and love her Son; as it is also the dearest wish of the Son, the thing most agreeable to him, that we should honor and love his Mother.

3. Prayer.

O holy Virgin and most afflicted Mother, whom I behold beneath the cross of thy Son, crucified most cruelly with him! I beg thee, I conjure thee to give me a share in thy sor-

rows, since I am their cause. Let the point of that sword that pierced thy heart through and through, enter mine, to make it feel thy affliction and thy Son's torments. Holy Mother, impress, even on the quick of my soul, the wounds of thy crucified Son, and give me to lament and weep his death with thee, and like thee, for the rest of my life. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verses.

"Call me not Noemi (that is, beautiful), but call me Mara (that is, bitter), for the Almighty hath quite filled me with bitterness." (Ruth i. 20.) The Almighty has filled me with great bitterness; and in fact the name of Mary signifies, among other things, a sea of bitterness.

"To what shall I compare thee, to what shall I equal thee, O virgin Daughter of Sion? for great as the sea is thy destruction." (Lam. ii. 13.) O Daughter of Sion, holy Virgin, to what shall I compare thee, to what affliction shall I liken thine? There is none, because thine is vast as the sea, which is almost limitless, and in which there is not a drop of sweet water, but all is bitter.

THREE O'CLOCK.

JESUS CHRIST DYING IN THE MIDST OF GREAT PRODIGIES.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord, "crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." (Matt. xxvii. 50.) And immediately the veil of the temple, which separated the two most holy places, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the earth trembled, the rocks were cleft, the tombs opened, and the sun clothed itself in mourning, covering its face with shadows that spread over all the earth. The centurion who commanded the company of soldiers, and the soldiers themselves, witnessing these prodigies, were sore afraid, and confessed that our Lord was indeed just, innocent, and the Son of God. And all the spectators returned greatly astonished, and striking their breasts in repentance. (Luke xxiii. 48.)

2. The Spirit of the Mystery.

Consider the great prodigies that came to pass at our Lord's death; but persuade yourself that it will be a still greater prodigy if, beholding those rendings of the rocks, those openings of the tombs, those phenomena of

nature, all those wonders that happened to inanimate things for which our Lord did not die, you who are endowed with reason, and for whom he did die to deliver you from all kinds of evil, and to load you with all blessings, are not affected, if your heart is not broken, if it does not open to God, if you do not change your life.

Therefore, withdrawing into yourself, strike your breast like the centurion, conceive regret for your offences, beg God to pardon them, and commence with a courageous and firm resolution a better life, to which our Lord unceasingly calls you by that loud cry he uttered at his death.

3. Prayer.

O my dear and all-powerful Redeemer, who at thy death hadst strength to tear away the veils and disclose the hidden things, to cause the motionless body of the earth to tremble, to break the hard rocks, and to open the sealed tombs! I beg thee by the merit of thy death to act thus powerfully upon my soul, and to produce spiritually and holily all these effects in it for its salvation and perfection. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verse.

"*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.*" (Ecclesia in offic. Parasc.) Jerusalem, Jerusalem, O soul purchased by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, be converted to the Lord thy God, who has loved thee even to dying on a gibbet for thy salvation, the most painful and ignominious of deaths!

FOUR O'CLOCK.

Jesus Christ Wounded in the Heart after his Death.

1. The Mystery.

One of the soldiers who had assisted at our Lord's execution, after he was dead, opened his side with a lance; and immediately there flowed out the little blood that remained, and water. (Jno. xix. 34.)

2. The Spirit of the Mystery.

Our Lord received after his death this wound in his side, in his heart, to show that his death and all his sufferings came from the heart, from the love he bore us, as their source; that they tended to love, to make us love him, as their end. Therefore, since it is in the wound of

his heart his love dwells, that wound is the wound of love.

Our Lord permitted his heart to be opened in order that we might enter it, might fix therein our dwelling, and never leaving it, might in it exercise all the works of the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive life.

St. Bernard addresses our Lord in these words: "They pierced thy side so that we might have a door to go to thee; they made a wound and cleft in thy heart so that we may find there a shelter from all the troubles and embarrassments of exterior things. Let us then approach and enter that heart; we will there enjoy marvelous pleasures, and will there find our paradise on earth. Oh! how good it is, what satisfaction and comfort to dwell in the Heart of Jesus!" (Bern. de Pass. c. 3.)

3. Prayer.

By thy Heart transpierced with the lance, and much more with the love thou bearest us, graciously deign, O sweet Jesus, to wound my heart with thy love. And since thou wast pleased that thine should be opened so that I might enter therein, give me grace to enter that sanctuary, to dwell, to work in it, to im-

bibe its purity, charity, meekness, and all its holy and divine dispositions. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verse.

"I shall die in my nest, and as a palm-tree, shall multiply all my days" (like the phœnix. Hebr. Tertul.) (Job. xxix. 18.) I shall die in my little nest, and like a palm-tree, shall there multiply my days and produce my fruits.

I desire to live to God and to die to myself in my little nest in the wound of my Saviour's Heart. There I will gain palms of victory over my vices and the enemies of my salvation; there I will burn and be reduced to ashes, and will renew myself, like the phœnix, to perform all my actions in a new and excellent manner.

FIVE O'CLOCK.

JESUS CHRIST TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS AND LAID IN THE SEPULCHRE.

1. The Mystery.

Our Lord, after having remained some hours on the cross, was taken down by Joseph, a native of Arimathea, and one of the counselors of Jerusalem, who was a man of wealth and rank. The sacred Body was

placed in the arms of the afflicted Mother, who at sight of it redoubled her weeping and experienced an increase of sorrow; after she had held it for some time, bathed it with her tears, and kissed it over and over again, it was embalmed with myrrh and aloes, and then laid in a sepulchre which Joseph recently had hewn for himself in the rock, and in which no corpse had as yet been placed. It was a grotto in a garden near Calvary.

2. *The Spirit of the Mystery.*

St. Paul teaches us what it is when he says, writing to the Romans: "We are buried together with him by baptism unto death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi. 4.) We have all been buried with our Lord Jesus Christ in baptism; that is, as our Lord lay dead in the sepulchre, so we die to sin by virtue of this sacrament to lead afterward a new life of purity, innocence, and elevation above the things of earth, a life resembling our Lord's life after his glorious resurrection. Whence the person baptized is plunged three times in the water to represent the three days our Lord lay in the sepulchre, also to represent

that person's death to sin and his burial to all the vanities of the world; for this reason likewise, the most suitable day for baptism was considered in the primitive Church to be Holy Saturday, the day our Lord spent in the tomb, and the white garment the priest gave the newly-baptized was a sign of the pure and innocent life to which their baptism obliged them.

Let us, continuing the symbolism, consider that the sepulchre newly hewn in the rock, which our Lord requires, is a heart renewed according to his spirit, and firmly and constantly established in the resolution to love him, to prefer him to all else, and to imitate his virtues. But he desires to be laid there embalmed with the aromatic and precious gums of myrrh and aloes; that is to say, we must make use of mortification and must subdue ourselves; then our heart will be a rich and magnificent mausoleum in which our dead Lord will repose willingly, and to which he will abundantly apply the merits of his death to purify it, sanctify it, and make it perfect according to God.

3. Prayer.

O my dear Saviour! I ask thee with all the ardor and affection I am capable of, that, since

by my baptism I have been entombed with thee as a member with the head, so I may die entirely and perseveringly to sin, I may renounce the pomps of the world and all commerce with the devil, according to the promise I made, and may live a life truly and excellently Christian, like a creature renewed in thee and animated with thy spirit. Amen.

4. Aspiratory Verse.

"And his sepulchre shall be glorious." (Is. xi. 10.) His sepulchre shall be glorious by reason of the concourse of Christians that shall come to visit it from all quarters of the earth.

But make still more glorious the one you have prepared for him in your heart; do this by acts of the virtues, particularly by mortification of your passions, and of all your irregular appetites.

CHAPTER VI.

PRACTICE OF UNION WITH OUR LORD FROM EASTER TO THE FEAST OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

I.—THE SUBJECT.

The Resurrection of our Lord, his Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the faithful, are the mysteries of this season, and will consequently form the subject of our considerations.

II.—THE AFFECTIONS.

1. Faith.

The Resurrection of our Lord, which, as St. Paul says, carries with it as a necessary consequence our resurrection, is the foundation of our religion, because it establishes beyond a doubt the doctrine of a future life where we are to be happy forever.

Without the sure hope of this future life we would be, says the same apostle, the most miserable of men—the most foolish, to deprive ourselves of the pleasures of the present life, and to take so much pains to bear our cross

in obedience to our Lord's command, if there were nothing better in reserve for us, if all must die with us. (1 Cor. xv. 19.) But with this hope we are exceedingly consoled, powerfully withheld from sin which is the only hindrance to our happy resurrection, strongly incited to virtue which is the means of procuring it, and fortified to endure patiently all the evils of this life, remembering the truth that St. Paul also teaches us: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.) All the afflictions we are capable of suffering now, do not approach in greatness the glory that is promised us.

It was to strengthen faith in this mystery, that our Lord did and said many things, that he remained on earth forty days after his resurrection, and appeared so frequently to so many persons. And the apostles in their preaching and in their writings endeavored to make it understood, and to impress it upon the minds of their disciples.

For this reason also Easter is the greatest of the Christian feasts. It is the Feast of feasts, says St. Gregory Nazianzen; it is the celebration of celebrations, and the grandest day of the year. Not that the resurrection

of the dead is the greatest of all mysteries; nor that it equals in any degree the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, or Pentecost; but because all the other mysteries tend to it, and the whole economy of our religion is directed to the glorious resurrection of our bodies, which will render us afterward perfectly happy. We would not be happy if our bodies as well as our souls did not partake of our happiness; for the soul alone is not man, but the soul and body united.

Therefore it is very important for us to be well persuaded of our future resurrection, and to firmly believe this truth. To effect this, let us frequently make acts of lively faith, saying with the apostles: "*Credo resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam æternam. Amen.* I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and life everlasting. Amen."

Let us say with the holy man Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." (Job. xix. 25, 26, 27.) I know with the infallible knowledge faith gives me,

that my Redeemer, from whom I expect my salvation and happiness, liveth, and that at the last day I shall go forth from my tomb in the vigor of life; that after my death my bones will again be covered with their flesh, and that in my own body and with my own eyes I shall see the God whom I adore, and that it will not be another who will see him for me.

2. Hope.

Our Lord by his resurrection has given us all a solid hope of rising one day with him, and of enjoying a glory, in some degree, like his. "God," says the apostle, "hath quickened us together in Christ, and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places." (Ephes. ii. 5, 6.) God has given us in Jesus Christ and through his merits the life of grace; he has raised us to glory, and has assigned us our places in heaven. If he be risen to a glorious life, doubtless we who have the honor of being his members, will rise with him to the same life; for it is not possible that the head alone should return to life without the body, but all the members must necessarily partake of its happiness, and rise with it.

The same apostle says again: "By a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. xv. 21.) As death entered the world by a man, that is by Adam when he sinned, so the resurrection of the dead also came by a man, who is our Lord Jesus Christ; as Adam contained in himself, in the order of nature, all men, inasmuch as they are all his posterity, so our Lord contains them all in himself, as regards the order of grace, because it is from him alone that they receive grace. Furthermore, just as in the person of Adam when he fell, when he died by sin, forfeited original justice, and was driven from the terrestrial paradise, we all fell, died, lost justice, and were banished in him from that abode of delights; just as we all were reduced to those misfortunes, so we have all risen from the tomb and returned to life with our Lord in his resurrection.

As the member dies with the head, the branch withers with the root, the stream dries up with its source, and the ray is eclipsed with the sun, and the same member lives again with the head, the branch revives with its root when in the spring-time it receives from it moisture and sap; the stream flows once more when its source is full, and the ray

reappears when the sun having broken through the cloud and dissipated the storm is again visible; so neither more nor less do we die with our Lord dying, and we rise with him when he rises, because he is our head and we are his members, he is our root and we are his branches, he is our source and our sun and we spring from his fountain and emanate from his rays. St. Leo says: "We have been crucified, we have died, we have been buried with Jesus Christ, and likewise we have risen with him the third day." (Serm. 2 de Resurr.)

If you desire to know how we rise with our Lord, and in what manner his resurrection is the cause of ours, the Angelical Doctor teaches it with much precision, explaining to us two principles: the first, that the thing which is the first of each kind or species, is always the cause and pattern of the things that follow and descend from it; as appears in Adam, the first man, and in the animals which were the beginning and progenitors of their species. Now the first who rose to die no more is without contradiction our Lord, whence St. Paul calls him "the first fruits of them that slept," (I. Cor. xv. 20,) that is, of the risen dead; not that he was the first who came back from death to life, since he himself had resuscitated

Lazarus and others; but because he was the first to rise to a glorious and immortal life. Consequently, his resurrection is the cause and law of ours.

According to the second principle, experience teaches us that a cause always produces its effect upon the object nearest to it, and then transmits it through this object to others more remote; thus fire warms first the air directly around, then through this air communicates warmth to the whole atmosphere; and we see how the magnet attracts first the iron close to it, then through this the more distant masses. Even so the Divinity, that is life in very essence, first communicates life to the dead body of our Lord for the reason that it is personally united to this body; then, through our Lord to all other bodies. (Summa p. 3, q. 57, a. 1.)

From this we should infer that the nearer we approach our Lord, the more closely we are attached to him, the more intimately united with him by faith, hope, charity, and the other virtues, the more brilliant and glorious will our resurrection be, because his will act more powerfully and more abundantly upon ours.

On this our hope is founded; our Lord's

resurrection assures us of ours, and strengthens us in our assurance. Tertullian said: "The trust, and the sweetest expectation of Christians, is the resurrection of the dead. (L. de Resurr. Carnis c. 1.) And St. Augustine: "This is our hope, the foundation of our faith, the solace of all our sufferings in this evil world, and the nerve of our perseverance." (In. Ps. 65.)

Thus the holy man Job, seated upon his dunghill, in the midst of his greatest sufferings and the sharpest of his pains, while scraping with his diamond, his ruby, I mean his piece of broken pottery, his sores and the matter that exuded from his infected body, after having made the act of faith in the future resurrection which we have already quoted, concludes: "This my hope is laid up in my bosom." (Job xix. 27.) I cherish in my spirit the hope of this happiness, I keep it in my breast as a thing whose memory I carefully preserve, that I do not wish to forget but to have ever before my eyes, and as something most rare, a precious jewel, which I singularly value and press to my heart to strengthen me to bear my miseries.

Again, while in the same condition, he says: "I expect until my change come." (Job xiv.

14.) I rest in the hope of my change; I await the hour when my body subject to so many infirmities, to so many diseases and to death, my soul prone to so many vices, my mind so ignorant and dark, my will so inert, so inclined to the love of creatures and so little touched with the love of my God, my passions so irregular and difficult to govern, and all within me where sin has left such fatal marks of its malignity and has produced so much corruption, will be changed and come to its last perfection and beatitude.

We ought to make use of these words and to produce frequently acts of hope of our resurrection, in order to animate ourselves to endure our trials patiently; and to give us more courage and even joy, it will be well to represent to ourselves the ravishing beauty, the admirable light surpassing that of the sun, the agility, the subtilty, the immortality of our risen bodies, and the torrents of unspeakable delights in which they will be immersed forever.

3. Joy.

The hope of all these blessings firmly established in our souls is, without doubt, capable of affording us singular satisfaction, and

of causing us to pass our life in very great joy; because the certain hope of a great good fills the soul with joy. "Rejoicing in hope," says St. Paul. (Rom. xii. 12.) Rejoice in the unfailing hope of being eternally happy if you live well. As the resurrection of our Lord gives us this hope, it consequently gives us a reason for this joy.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein," sings the Royal Prophet. (Ps. cxvii. 24.) This is the day the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and let us leap for gladness on this day. Some have thought these words referred to the day of the Incarnation, when the Son of God clothed himself with our nature that he might deliver us from our miseries and enrich us with his blessings. The Church applies them to the day of our Lord's circumcision which is the octave of his birth when he appeared visibly to the eyes of men, and the first day which he empurpled with his blood for their love, and which also is the opening day of the year. St. Jerome and St. Augustine consider that the words refer to the whole period of the New Law, in which we should be always happy, because we have tokens and infallible assurances of our beatitude in the future life

if we keep God's commandments; and in the present life that nothing can injure us excepting sin, but all may be very advantageous to us if we use it well.

This is why it may be said of Christians with much more truth than an ancient writer said of the Platonists: "We who are of the family of Plato and his disciples, banish from our midst all sadness and discontent, and admit only what is gay, heavenly, and divine." (Apuleius.) Thus St. Paul says to all, as well as to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice." (Philipp. iv. 4.) Rejoice always in our Lord; again I beg you, rejoice, because you have great reason to do so. St. Francis used to tell his religious that it was the business of the devil and his followers who were on the road to hell, to be sad; but it was for us to rejoice, and to exclude from our hearts sadness and grief.

The holy Fathers, however, and the Church generally, understand the words of David to apply to the day of our Lord's resurrection; therefore the Church frequently repeats them during the octave of that feast, because we have all very great reason to rejoice on that day. There was nothing in the universe that

had not in our Lord's resurrection a new motive of joy, his Father in heaven, his Mother and his disciples on earth, the saints in limbo, and all men everywhere. St. Peter Damian, writing to Pope Nicholas II., even says, as coming from Archbishop Hubert, that the damned, in honor of the resurrection of our Lord and the joy it brought to the world, receive every Sunday some diminution of their torments, some alleviation of their pains. This, if true, must be understood of the pains of the senses.

But what is true and a great cause of joy on the feast of the Resurrection, is that all the faithful, or the greater number, who were in a state of sin, have, in prepartion for this feast, purified their consciences by Confession and Communion; that is, on this day more than on any other of the whole year there are more true Christians, more souls in a state of grace, God has more servants, the Church more children, Jesus Christ more living members and more brethren.

For these reasons St. Augustine said that Easter-day seemed to him more beautiful than other days, that the sun appeared to his eyes to shine with a different light, that its aspect was more gladsome than ordinarily; that the

stars showed themselves more adorned, more richly clothed, and the elements were gayer and more joyous. (Serm. 136. de temp.) And to the present time it is the custom in the Greek Church for the faithful on Easter morning to joyfully embrace one another, saluting: "Jesus Christ is risen!" and replying: "Yes, he is truly risen!" The signification of this is the argument of St. Paul: We shall rise one day like him, consequently we should rejoice.

Therefore the proper affection and the especial sentiment of Easter-day, and of the whole Paschal season, is a holy joy and a sentiment of divine gladness. Hence Tertullian said: "From Easter to Pentecost we should rejoice and preserve our souls in a holy gaiety." (L. de Corona mil. c. 3.) For the same reason the Church during all this season sings so frequently, and jubilantly echoes her *Alleluias*.

It is our duty, then, to follow her guidance, and to adopt her sentiments, endeavoring to fill our souls with a divine joy, and to participate in that immense satisfaction our Lord received in his resurrection, when he beheld himself victorious over all his enemies, covered with sovereign glory, and enjoying a life eternally blessed. This is why he says to us: "That my joy may be in you, enter

thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Jno. xv. 11, and Matt. xxv. 21.) And the Church begins the Mass of the Saturday in the Octave of Easter, with these words of David: "He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness." (Ps. civ. 43.) The Lord has brought his people with jubilation, and led his elect with pleasure. He has guided them with songs of gladness and with canticles of joy.

4. Contempt of the Goods and Evils of this Life.

That great, solid, and divine joy with which the resurrection of our Lord and the other mysteries of this season embalm our spirits, should cause us to scorn the goods and evils, the joy and the bitterness of this life.

First, the goods and pleasures: Just as a great and powerful monarch filled with all the contentment of earth, as Solomon was, makes no account of the puerile pastime children find in building mud-houses and walking on stilts, so we should pay no attention to the trifling goods of this world.

Joy, says Aristotle, flows into a soul either from the possession of a desired good, or from the certain and sure hope of possessing it.

Now we have in the present life a hope as certain as the existence of God is, that if we observe his commandments, we shall enjoy the riches, honors, and great and lasting pleasures of paradise. Even now every just man possesses the treasures of grace, sanctifying grace, charity, the theological and moral virtues infused and supernatural, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the glory of being a child of God, a brother, coheir, and living member of Jesus Christ, and a companion of the angels; goods so great that in comparison with the least of them, all the empires, all the riches, all the magnificence, and all the possessions of earth are not worth a straw, are not so much as the light of a candle to the rays of the sun. Therefore we have a wonderful reason to rejoice, and to hold in contempt all the goods and all the joys of this life.

Were the absolute gift of a hundred million of dollars in gold to be made to a man carried away with the love of riches, or if this gift were not bestowed directly, but a promise made that in three weeks he would certainly receive it, who can doubt but that he would feel inexplicable joy, that he would be almost beside himself at the prospect of

attaining a good so great in his estimation, and so comformable to his desires? Moreover, would he not have reason to scorn a trifling sum of money, would he need to worry about the loss of a farthing? We have much greater reason to do the same, since we are far richer; and the goods that are promised us are not distant if we make ourselves worthy of them, because our life is so short.

But the trouble is we do not appreciate our riches, whence it happens that we make great account of those of earth although they are very petty and uncertain. In this we resemble some very rich and powerful king, but who is still only a child; the weakness of his age renders him incapable of enjoying his wealth and of esteeming the greatness of his fortune, and causes him to weep and cry if he is refused an apple. "O children, how long will you love childishness, and the unwise hate knowledge?" (Prov. i. 22.) Little children, true children, with the affections and desires of children, how long will you love playthings, and hold wisdom in aversion?

Secondly, the joy of the Resurrection should make us scorn the evils of this life and enable us to bear them, not only with patience and meekness, but with a certain insensibility, just

as a man whose soul is penetrated with extreme pleasure, all dissolved in joy and inundated with delight, does not feel the prick of a pin.

For this object we should wisely banish all the dark and melancholy thoughts, all the discouragement and mistrust, all the trouble and discontent that may attack us, as so many malignant vapors, and divert ourselves with the agreeable thought of the blessings of grace and glory that we may possess now and forever, and say with St. Paul: "Knowing that he who raised up Jesus will raise us up also with Jesus." (2 Cor. iv. 14.) We believe that he who raised up Jesus will raise us with him, freed from all evils and filled with every good.

5. Prayers and Requests.

We must earnestly pray to our Lord, begging him with great affection to be pleased to rise in us, to accomplish in our interior and exterior the effects of his holy and glorious resurrection, and to produce in our soul and body a light, an agility, a subtilty, and an immortality of grace, while we await that of glory. We must pray him to produce in us

the impressions of virtue and perfection, to give us the sentiments of piety the faithful received when he appeared to them during the forty days he remained on earth after his resurrection. We must implore him to impress on us the particular grace of his ascension, which consists in an ascension of our souls and an elvation of our spirits above all the things of earth, with a true contempt of all the honors of the world, its riches and pleasures, as being infinitely below the blessings in store for us, and the greatness of a true Christian.

We should pray and conjure the Holy Ghost to effect in us a new Pentecost, to come to us in the form of a tongue of fire to purify us, to strengthen us, to illumine us, to warm us, to burn and change us, and to reform our tongues in speech and silence. We should supplicate him with all the earnestness possible that, as his seven gifts are absolutely necessary to bring the virtues to perfection, and to enable us to lead lives truly Christian, spiritual, and divine, he would have the goodness, he who is himself essential and personal goodness, to pour them into our souls with abundant profusion.

III.—THE VIRTUES.

1. A Heavenly Life.

St. Paul says: "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi. 4.) As Jesus Christ is risen for the glory of his Father, and by his resurrection to commence a new life, suitable to the dignity of the Son of God, so we, to imitate him, must live a new life. The word Easter obliges us to it, because it signifies, according to St. Jerome, a change and a passage. St. Bernard says, referring to it: "Our Lord passing to a new life, invites us to follow him, to change our lives." (Bern. Serm. 1. de Resurr. Dom.)

Let us no longer live as we have lived, with thoughts, words, and works that are entirely for earth; but let us live for Heaven. St. Paul says to us, as well as to the Colossians: "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Coloss. iii. 1, 2, 3.) You are dead in Jesus Christ to sin and to all the

things of the world, and your life is hidden with his in God.

Assuredly the members must participate in the dispositions of the head, and it is not possible for them to live separated from its life. This is why, having the honor to be members of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ being risen, and we risen in him, we must now lead, like him, a heavenly life, conducting ourselves here below as inhabitants of the other world.

In another place, St. Paul tells us: "Their glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. Our conversation is in heaven." (Philipp. iii. 19, 20.) The glory, riches, pleasures, and all the actions of those who boast of being Christians, and nevertheless are attached to the earth, will turn to their confusion. But our conversation, and that of all who worthily bear this illustrious name and are living members of Jesus Christ, our honors, our riches, our satisfaction, and the whole tenor of our life, prove us to be persons who profess a heavenly life, who value and contemn, who love and hate, who seek and avoid things, after the fashion of the dwellers in heaven.

If one of those blessed souls that rose with our Lord, and united to their bodies, are now

in heaven, should be permitted by God to return to earth to live with us, what would be his thonghts? What his affections, his words, and his works? How would he not scorn gold and silver, precious stones and palaces, sceptres and crowns? He would find bitter our sweetest delights, and the most beautiful countenances would appear to him very ugly. He would say to those who would be astonished at his contempt and his sentiments: I have tasted other delights, I have seen other beauties, I have known other honors and other riches; all that I behold on earth is only fit to amuse children who have no knowledge of higher things.

In this sense God says to the Christian soul by his prophet: "I shod thee with violet-colored shoes." (Ezech. xvi. 10.) I have shod thee with the heavenly blue, meaning to tell that soul that its feet, that is its affections, its desires and hopes, should continually aspire to heaven, and that all its steps should lead to that blessed abode. The belief of the Church, which the painters have followed in their pictures, is that our Lady, as an expression of her sentiments elevated above the earth, a sign of her heavenly life, was always clothed in blue.

On the day of the Ascension, which is another mystery of this season, the day when our Lord ascended in body and soul to heaven, the Blessed Virgin and the apostles who were spectators of that admirable triumph, followed him with their eyes, and still closer with their hearts which that glorious conqueror carried with him; so that thenceforward they led even more than before a life entirely in heaven. Certainly the most noble bearing and the most beautiful posture of the Christian is that of the apostles, accompanying our Lord in his triumph, and keeping the eyes of the soul, its thoughts and affections, inseparably fixed on heaven as the goal of its desires.

Hence we read of several saints, as St. Francis and his first disciple, the Blessed Bernard of Quintavalle, St. Ignatius, our founder, and others, that they took great pleasure in gazing at the heavens, and spent much time in contemplation of that abode of their felicity, because this gaze and contemplation gave them courage, strength, joy, and a profound contempt of the things of earth. St. Ignatius exclaimed: "*Quam sordet tellus cum cælum aspicio!*" "How miserable appear to me the things of earth, and all that is most charming in it, when I consider the heavens, and what

is there prepared for us!" Theodoret relates that St. Simeon Stylites passed the days and nights upon his column, standing, with his eyes and arms raised to heaven, and that he exhorted the crowds that came to see him, to gaze only at heaven, and to fix there their hearts. The greater part of Christians raise their eyes to heaven only to see what the weather is, which direction the wind comes from; but they ought to lift their eyes, and look at it frequently and attentively, as the magnificent palace of their eternal dwelling furnished with glory and riches, and all sorts of delights, the palace God has built, which our Lord has purchased for them, and where their relations and friends await them.

This heavenly life is the Christian life, the spiritual and divine life which the Holy Ghost inspired to the faithful when he descended upon them on the day of Pentecost, and which he daily inspires to us; a life in which we are dead to sin, according to St. Paul, and "alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. vi. 11); a life in which we endeavor to make ourselves, like the dead, insensible to a thousand things, in which we value no more than the dead do all that men admire and esteem upon earth; a life in which we live with interior

joy, with peace and tranquillity, amid all the evils that afflict us, resting upon the hope of the good things that will one day be ours.

O happy life! foretaste of heaven upon earth! Life of God and in God, upon the pattern of the life of Jesus Christ, and consequently life of joy, in which the Holy Ghost on Pentecost established the faithful! Life of peace, which our Lord also after his resurrection wished and gave so many times to his disciples, saying to them: "*Pax vobis*," Peace be with you! I leave you peace; I give you my peace, not that which the world gives, and which rests on vain honors, perishable riches, and the satisfaction of the senses; but peace of the soul and repose of the spirit amid your afflictions and all the vicissitudes of your mortal life, which is founded on contempt of the honors, riches, and pleasures of earth, for it is this contempt which produces this peace and repose. Thus St. Bernard said: "Give me a soul to which contempt of all the things of earth has given peace, and which it has put at rest." (Serm. 74 in Cant.)

It is thus we must express in our life the mysteries of the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, and ardently desire to draw him into

us in these states, so as to imbibe their spirit and bear their marks. For, as we have already said, we must represent in ourselves the mysteries of our Lord, if we wish to receive their fruits.

St. Augustine says: "All that was done on the cross of our Lord, at his burial, in his resurrection, and his ascension into heaven, was intended to be reproduced spiritually, not only in words but in effects, in the Christian's life on earth." Then, explaining himself in detail, he continues:

"For it has been said by St. Paul, speaking of the cross, that those who make profession of being disciples of Jesus Christ, have crucified their flesh with their vices and concupiscences. Speaking of the sepulture of our Lord, he says: We have by baptism been buried with Jesus Christ to die to sin. Of his resurrection: As Jesus Christ rising from the dead with the immortal and glorious life he received from his Father, lived after his resurrection differently from before, in like manner we, after his example, forsake our former life, despoil ourselves of our old habits, to lead a new life. Finally, as regards the ascension, the apostle said: If you be risen with Jesus Christ, make it appear by seeking and tasting

the things which are in heaven, where Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and not those of earth." (Euchir. c. 53.)

Thus the Christian should bear the features and lineaments of our Lord's mysteries engraven upon his person; and should be in his life, as it were, an image of Jesus Christ dead, buried, risen, and ascended into heaven.

2. *Life of Love toward our Lord.*

One of the principal and most suitable affections that should be produced in our hearts by the mysteries of the Paschal season, is an ardent love toward our Lord Jesus Christ. There are two powerful reasons to enkindle this love, namely: the death he has, as it were, just suffered for us, with its testimonies of his infinite love; and the ravishing beauty of his risen body, which, without contradiction renders him the most beautiful object, and therefore the most worthy of love, in all the world.

These two reasons were indicated by David in Psalm XCII., which, according to the interpretation of the Fathers and of the universal Church, treats of the beauty, glory, and power our Lord acquired by his death and resurrection. "*Dominus regnavit, decorum*

indutus est"—The Lord hath reigned, he is clothed with beauty and glory. "*Dominus regnavit*"—the Lord hath reigned—and is become King and absolute Lord; first, over all his enemies, whom he has subjugated and conquered forever; and secondly, over men, whom he has gained to his kingdom by his love and benefits. But how has he reigned? "*Dominus regnavit a ligno*," sings the Church. The Lord hath reigned by the wood of his cross, or by dying, and by his death he has made himself the victor over death in his resurrection. "*Decorum indutus est*"—he has been clothed with sovereign beauty, with most radiant glory, and with every attraction. These two motives are doubtless very efficacious to cause us to love our Lord perfectly, and to experience toward him all the sentiments expressed by the Spouse in the Book of Canticles.

Let us now consider the first of these motives, the passion and death our Lord was pleased to endure for our salvation. It obliges us to love him by every title of justice; for, in the first place, he has purchased us at the price of his blood, so that our bodies, our souls, our hearts, and our affections no longer belong to ourselves, but to him. "You are

not your own," says St. Paul, "for you are bought with a great price." (I. Cor. vi. 19, 20.) You are not your own, but belong to him who has purchased you so dearly. In the second place, if we did not of right belong to him, the excessive love he has borne us, and the death he has suffered for our sakes, should force us to love him; inasmuch as the most powerful motive for love is love itself, and it is extremely difficult and almost impossible not to be won by a person who loves us deeply. For this reason, the same apostle in the following words excites the Corinthians, and us with them, to love our Lord: "The charity of Christ presseth us; judging this, that Christ died for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them." (II. Cor. v. 14, 15.) The love of Jesus Christ urges us and does us violence, when we consider how he died for all, so that they who live, grateful for such an excess of love, may no longer live for themselves, but for him who has given his life for them.

St. Bernard expresses the same sentiment when he writes: "If I owe to our Lord all I am, and am bound to love him because he has created me, what do I not owe him, and how am I not obliged to love him for having crea-

ted me anew, and in such a manner!" (Tr. de dilig. Deo.) In another place he says: "It is true that the benefit of creation, that of preservation, and so many others which our Lord has bestowed, and continues to bestow upon me, are powerful motives to incite me to love him; but there is another that urges me still more, since it affects me more sensibly and fires me more intensely than aught else. It is, O good Jesus, the chalice of bitterness thou hast drunk for us and our redemption that renders thee amiable to our hearts; for this sovereign benefit and this incomparable testimony of thy love, carries away and most powerfully ravishes ours, most sweetly attracts our affection, most justly exacts it, most closely binds it, and most strongly touches it." (Serm. 20, in Cant.)

Verily, if a wise, virtuous, and valiant prince, one endowed with all perfections of body and mind, had taken up arms in your interest, to defend your honor that wicked tongues had sullied, to deliver you from infamy, poverty, and a cruel prison, and to elevate you to sovereign honors, exceeding great riches, and a most happy liberty; and if, in combating your enemy who had caused you all these misfortunes, he had been put to death, and

not only put to death, but left on the field pierced with wounds and covered with his blood: I ask you, in the first place, whether you would not consider yourself obliged during the remainder of your life to love this prince most ardently, to love this benefactor, even if he were not a prince, but merely an humble peasant? I ask you, in the second place, whether, in case you did not love him, you would not deem yourself most ungrateful, brutal, and unworthy of the life, honor, and blessings he had restored to you? In the third place, whether you could help loving him, whether you could help thinking of him? Assuredly, no. Now, from this you can understand your position in regard to our Lord, how you should act toward him, since he holds the position of this prince to you, and has even infinitely greater claims upon you.

"*Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando;*
Dux vitæ mortuus, regnat vivus."

"Together, Death and Life in a strange conflict strove;
The Prince of Life, who died, now lives and reigns,"

sings the Church in the Prose of Easter; and in the Preface of the Mass of Easter-day she says: "*Mortem nostrum moriendo destruxit.*"

By dying he has destroyed our death, and fought and defeated all our enemies.

To pass to the second motive for love of our Lord, namely, his beauty and perfections. The Royal Prophet says: "He is clothed with beauty" (Ps. xcii. 1); and in another place: "His glory is great in thy salvation; glory and great beauty shalt thou lay upon him." (Ps. xx. 6.) Oh! how great was his glory when by thy power thou didst save him from death and deliver him from the tomb. Thou didst clothe him with majesty and give him a wondrous beauty. This is what St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews: "We see Jesus for the sufferings of death, crowned with glory and honor." (Hebr. ii. 9.) We know that Jesus as the recompense of his death, is now crowned with glory and honor, for in Psalm VIII. we find these words: "Thou hast crowned him with glory." (Ps. viii. 6.)

Our Lord being so admirably beautiful, and radiant with such great glory and so many perfections, is undoubtedly the object most worthy of love in all the world, and consequently the one we ought to love above everything and with the whole strength of our affections. We know and learn from too many examples the immense power physi-

cal beauty exercises over minds; what then should be the effect of our Lord's unsurpassing beauty on our minds and hearts? If the least of the blessed, who is united to his body, should descend here below and become visible to the eyes of men, his beauty would excite such great astonishment and admiration, that all would be in transports and raptures; they would swoon, languish, pine away, and die, if we may so speak, at his feet. For if a mortal beauty sometimes produces these effects, an immortal, compared to which the mortal is nothing, would doubtless do the same, and in a much greater degree; such unequaled beauty would create so violent a desire to behold it, that people would hasten from all directions and all countries, would forsake all, leave every occupation, to enjoy such a spectacle, to gaze upon so ravishing an object.

Now, if the beauty of the least of the blessed would be capable of producing such marvelous impressions upon men who would never have received from it any other good, how should we not be impressed by the infinitely surpassing beauty of our Lord, which infinitely excels theirs, our Lord who by the innumer-

able benefits he has conferred upon us, merits all the love of our hearts.

Let us remark that the greatest miracle of beauty that was ever known is our Lord Jesus Christ, because he possesses the three most beautiful things. His sacred body is unquestionably the most beautiful and most pleasing of all bodies; his holy soul the most excellent of all souls, and endowed with the most perfect of minds; and his divinity is the beauty of beauties, in comparison with which all created beauties are only as the stars before the sun, nay, even seem like visions of ugliness.

These two reasons ought to kindle in our hearts ardor and zeal for our Lord, and cause us to lead a life of love for him, as he has led a life of love for us; and as a means to this life we should frequently think of him, sigh for him, and produce acts of the love of preference, of the love of complacency, of good will, of aspiration, and others, and should seek only his interests through the motive of love for him.

The Holy Spirit, whom St. Peter calls the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter i. 11), and whom our Lord calls his Spirit, because he proceeds from him as well as from the Father (Jno. xv. 26; xvi.

13), and Christ has merited for us his coming; the Holy Spirit, who is love in essence and in person, on the day of Pentecost inflamed the hearts of the faithful with love for our Lord, and engraved in their souls the new law, which is a law of love differing only from the old law, as St. Augustine said, by these two short words, *Timor et Amor*—Fear and Love; a saying that St. Thomas repeats: "The difference between the old and new Testaments is little—fear and love." (In. c. 13, Jno.) The old law was a law of fear; the new is one of love, which enjoins as its first and chief commandment, and in a manner much more emphatic than in the old law, to love God with all our strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. We accomplish this perfectly when we love our Lord, because he is in the first place God, and in the second place our neighbor, since he is man, and the most important of men; and he is the first of our neighbors, because he has approached so near us, has united himself personally to our nature, and daily unites himself with us in the adorable Sacrament of his Body and Blood, and because he comes to us in the thousands and thousands of blessings which he constantly lavishes upon us.

3. Firmness and Perseverance in this Heavenly Life, and in this Life of Love.

This is what we should learn from our Lord risen, of whom St. Paul says: "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over him." (Rom. vi. 9.) He is in a state of inviolable stability, of immortal life. We likewise, having formed the design of rising with our Lord, and by our resurrection of leading a heavenly life, a life of love toward this same Lord, must not give up and return to creatures, to our affection for the things of earth.

Let us remember that our Lord's resurrection is an everlasting resurrection, and that the Passover is a passage, a transition, not a return, as St. Bernard explains when he says: "Jesus Christ, to-day while we celebrate the Feast of his Resurrection, has not returned to the tomb, but is still risen; has not gone back, but has passed onward; has not lingered behind, but has hastened forward. The word Easter declares this by its very meaning, for it signifies passage, not return. The country of Galilee whither the disciples repaired to meet their risen Lord, also expresses by its name, not a drawing back, but

an advance. What shall we reply to this, save that we take away from the sacred resurrection of our Lord its name of Easter, when we return to our vices instead of advancing more in virtue?" (Serm. 1, de Resurr.)

The difference between the resurrection of the good and of the bad, of the perfect and the imperfect, is that the former constantly progress in the virtuous life already begun, and the latter readily draw back; the former rise to die no more, the latter rise but to fall anew beneath the power of death. Our Lord rose to an immortal life, as a sign of which, and to show that he would have no more need of it, he left his winding-sheet in the tomb. When Lazarus rose he was still wrapped in his because it would again be necessary to him; and in fact he died again; which should teach us that when our resurrection is made in our burial-clothes, I mean our passions and bad habits with no effort to divest ourselves of them, we will easily fall again and return to our vices. Therefore, endeavor to rise as our Lord did.

St. Bernard says: "Virtue and perseverance in good works is that perseverance to which alone the crown is promised and given. For what does it profit to be good, wise, and

strong, if we do not continue to be so, if we do not preserve our goodness, wisdom, and strength to the end?" (De Pass. Dom. c. 14.) What use is it to have well commenced, if we finish badly? Saul, Solomon, and Judas, all made good beginnings; but how did they end? The first killed himself; the second fell into idolatry; and the third, after having sold the Saviour of the world, hanged himself. It is not enough to begin well, but it is all to end well. Thus St. Jerome says: "We do not regard in a Christian how he commences, but how he finishes." Of a truth, it helps very little toward the winning of a prize, to have begun the race well if we do not press on to the end of the course.

For this reason our Lord tells us: "He that shall persevere unto the end, shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22); and he alone shall be saved. In the Book of Ecclesiasticus we read: "Woe to them that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways." (Eccl. ii. 16.) Woe to them that have retired from the race, that have lost their constancy, that have given up their exercises of devotion, that have turned aside from the right path. This turning aside and this inconstancy can only be most hurtful to them. As a traveler advances on his road

only by walking and continuing to walk, so we make progress in the way of virtue only by persevering.

But as this perseverance, this continuation of the same efforts, of the same attention and application to our exercises of piety, is one of the most difficult things for our virtue, feeble and changeful as it is, it easily relaxes and grows cold. Therefore we must reanimate and strengthen it with great care and skill, and when it is in some degree benumbed and asleep, we must awaken it, spurring and encouraging ourselves by some powerful reason, and especially by insisting on the necessity of this perseverance in order to pursue again, and joyfully, our road, and to continue our course.

Let us consider, in order to establish ourselves in this important truth, what was said to our Lord as he hung on his cross, and what he did. Here is what St. Bernard says about it. The Jews had cried out to our Lord: Let him come down from the cross and we will believe in him! This holy father says: "On the contrary, he did not come down, but remained and died thereon, so that he might ascend to heaven. Let us who follow Jesus Christ our Head, in like manner hearken to no one, neither to flesh, nor blood, nor to any

spirit that would persuade us to come down from the cross. Let us remain on the cross, let us die on the cross, and let us be taken down as he was, only by the hands of others, and not by our own levity and inconstancy." (Serm. 1. de Resurr.)

But as this unfailing constancy in good and even unto death, and the grace of final perseverance upon which our salvation absolutely depends, are very great gifts of God, which we are incapable of meriting any more than the first grace, we must earnestly beg them of God by all that can move him, especially by the perseverance and holy death of his Son.

St. Cyprian and St. Augustine say that because the gift of perseverance is the most important of all gifts, our Lord composed the Lord's Prayer, which we repeat many times every day, particularly to make us ask God for perseverance, and to obtain it from his mercy, and this they prove by the following details (Cypr. L. de orat. Dom.—Aug. L. de dono Persev. c. 2):

The first petition is: "Hallowed be thy name." In this petition we do not ask God, say these saints, to be sanctified in himself by

our prayers, since he is already infinite sanctity, but to be sanctified in us; that we having been sanctified by the waters of baptism, may ever continue so. We pray him that this sanctification may remain inviolable in us. We beg him continually, we supplicate him day and night to preserve in us without intermission the life of grace which his goodness has bestowed upon us.

"Thy kingdom come." It is clear that in this petition we ask for final perseverance in virtue and grace, since this is absolutely necessary to reach God's kingdom.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." St. Cyprian thus explains these words: by earth he understands our bodies, and by heaven our souls; and he says that we pray God to give us grace to accomplish with both his holy will This will, St. Augustine adds, must be fulfilled to the end by him who would attain beatitude.

"Give us this day our daily bread." Upon this petition St. Cyprian remarks: "We ask this daily bread to obtain the gift of perseverance, for fear lest, being united by grace to Jesus Christ, and daily receiving the Eucharist as the food of salvation, we should

commit some mortal sin which would render us unworthy to partake of that heavenly bread, and so would separate us from the body of Jesus Christ."

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." These two saints consider that this petition does not regard final perseverance; but others think it has reference to that grace, because as sin is more than anything else an obstacle to perseverance, inasmuch as it deprives the soul of sanctifying grace, diminishes actual graces, and thus takes from the soul the power of persevering, so they deem the pardon of it necessary in order to avoid further sin, to overcome temptations, to practice good works, and persevere in them to the end.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." St. Augustine says: What else do we ask by this prayer, but to persevere and die in holiness?

As final perseverance is the gift of gifts upon which depends the security of our eternal happiness, and as the Lord's Prayer was composed principally to ask and obtain it of God, let us remember to make it one of our chief intentions when we repeat this prayer.

IV.—MEDITATIONS.

These should be made on the mysteries of the season. The author refers to several meditations in a work called "*The Illuminative Life of Jesus in the Desert*," as being very suitable to enkindle love for our Lord.

V.—READING.

See this heading in Chapter III.

VI.—ASPIRATORY VERSES.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth; this my hope is laid up in my bosom." (Job. xix. 25. 27.) I believe that my Redeemer, after having passed through the pangs of death, is now living, and that I shall rise at the last day and shall see him with my eyes. I bear this hope in my breast and in my spirit, and it strengthens and consoles me.

"But I will rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in God my Jesus. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like the feet of harts; and he, the conqueror, will lead me upon my high places singing psalms." (Hab. iii. 18, 19.) Let others rejoice if they will in the perishable things of this life; as

for me, I will rejoice because our Lord is risen, and by his resurrection gives me hope of rising one day with him. It is in Jesus, my God and my Saviour, that I rest all my contentment and all my pleasures. The Lord God is my strength, and he will give me the feet of the stag; having himself conquered death, he will give me grace to conquer it, and will raise me up to high things and to my beatitude, where I shall sing canticles of praise and joy.

"Thou art beautiful above the sons of men." (Ps. xliv. 3.) The Lord my Saviour is beautiful above the children of men; he has far greater attractions and charms than creatures have.

"Persevere under discipline." (Heb. xii. 7.) Persevere constantly in your exercises of devotion, and be exact to perform them with care and fruit.

"Remember Lot's wife." (Luke xvii. 32.) Remember Lot's wife, who having turned her head to look back at the city of Sodom, and not having kept on her way as she ought, was struck dead on the spot and changed into a pillar of salt, to teach us perseverance, to make us wise at her expense.

CHAPTER VII.

PRACTICE OF UNION WITH OUR LORD IN THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST FROM THE FEAST OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT TO THE MONTH OF AUGUST.

I.—THE SUBJECT.

The exercise of this season will be upon the adorable mystery of the most holy EUCHARIST, considered both as a Sacrament and as a Sacrifice.

The practice will be to say or hear Mass, to communicate sacramentally or spiritually, and to visit the Blessed Sacrament with new care and increased devotion.

II.—THE AFFECTIONS.

The two principal mysteries of our Lord Jesus Christ are his Incarnation and his Death, the beginning and close of his mortal life. By his Incarnation he united himself to our nature in an individual humanity, and by this union infinitely ennobled and honored it; by his Death he saved it, drew it from the abyss of its miseries, and loaded it with his bless-

ings, and rendered it capable of the possession of God, and of eternal beatitude.

The mystery of the Eucharist includes, according to St. Thomas, that of the Incarnation, because the Incarnate Word unites himself to all individual men who receive the Eucharist, and becomes incarnate in a certain manner in them. It likewise effectively represents the death of Christ, it transmits the grace of his death, and communicates its salutary effects. God found out this admirable invention to renew in us these two mysteries, and to apply to us their fruits; like a second Incarnation it produces in us union with our Lord, and it is the chief channel through which flow to us the merits of the cross and the gifts of God.

This is why whosoever desires to receive these abundantly, and to be united intimately with Jesus Christ, should approach this divine mystery with great care, and should do as far as he can what St. Bonaventure relates of St. Francis: "He was transported by the strength of his affection for the Blessed Sacrament, and experienced toward it ardors and fires of love that consumed him internally, leaving him plunged in most profound astonishment at that favor so full of extreme love

and infinite kindness which God deigns to show to men." (In vita S. Franc. c. 9.)

As the beatitude of heaven in the state of glory is Jesus Christ, God and man—to see him, love him, possess him, be united to him, speak to him, converse with him, and remain perpetually in his society—even so the happiness and perfection of earth in the state of grace is Jesus Christ and the same relations between him and us. And since we have Jesus Christ, God and man, on earth substantially and in person only in the Blessed Sacrament, we ought to do all in our power to bind and unite ourselves to the Blessed Sacrament, and in it to Jesus Christ, by faith in the mystery, by adoration, hope and love, by sacramental and spiritual communions, by frequent visits, and by all the other means that may procure us that happiness.

Verily, Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is all our good in this life, our treasure on earth. St. Theresa after her death appeared, endowed with admirable beauty and resplendent with most clear light, to a virtuous person, and addressed her these remarkable words bearing on our subject: "We who are in heaven, and you who are still on earth should be united in love and purity; we beholding the Divine

Essence, and you adoring the Blessed Sacrament, toward which you should do what we do toward the Divine Essence." Such were her words.

Let us now consider what is the occupation of the blessed in regard to the Divine Essence. They are intimately and inseparably united to it; they look upon it and contemplate it incessantly, and this gaze, this contemplation renders them holy, wise, impeccable, tranquil, contented, and happy, and causes them to burn with the love of so amiable an object, and to scorn in comparison with it all the most precious and most beautiful things of earth as so much dirt and mire.

We ought to conduct ourselves as far as we can in the same manner toward our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and to receive from him the same effects; we ought to unite ourselves continually to it by interior acts of the virtues, with the eyes of faith to behold him everywhere in it, to converse with him, and by this vision and conversation to acquire holiness, and lead a life of perfection in great contempt of all the things of earth; and finally, to find in this mystery all the happiness we are capable of enjoying in this world, for, as St.

Jerome says (Hieron. in c. 3. Eccles.): "We have in this life this single good, that we are nourished with his flesh and refreshed with his blood."

As the blessed see in the Divine Essence all that concerns their beatitude, and are therein enlightened with regard to all that pertains to them in the state of glory, in the same manner we should learn from the Holy Eucharist all that concerns our salvation, and find in it instructions for all that regards our conduct here below in the state of grace.

III.—THE VIRTUES.

Isaiah, in the thirtieth chapter of his prophecy addresses us words of great consolation, and makes us on the part of God a rich promise, when he says: "The Lord will give you spare bread, and will not cause thy teacher to flee away from thee any more; and thy eyes shall see thy teacher, and thy ears shall hear the word of one admonishing thee behind thy back: This is the way, walk ye in it and go not aside, neither to the right hand nor to the left." (Is. xxx. 20, 21.) The Lord will give you bread, and will not permit you to lose sight of your doctor and your master; your

eyes shall see him, and your ears shall hear him tell you: This is the road that you must take; follow it without turning a single step, neither to the right nor the left.

The prophet promises us bread and a master. It would seem that there could be no connection nor relation between these two things; nevertheless there is, and in a close degree, because by this bread is meant the Eucharistic bread, and by this master our Lord, who under the accidents of this bread teaches us in an excellent manner the spiritual life, and gives us lessons of very high perfection. Our Lord in his character of master has had three chairs whence he has taught men by example: the first was his crib, the second his cross, and the third is the Eucharist, of which these words of Isaiah are principally to be understood, especially where they tell us that God will no more take away our teacher; because the first two chairs exist no longer, but the third remains forever. From this third chair our Lord in person teaches us at all times and in all places what we ought to do to become virtuous, spiritual, and perfect. And now hearken to his lessons.

1. This Divine Master's first lesson from the Chair of the Eucharist.

This first lesson is on the very essence of the spiritual life and the fundamental point of perfection, which consists not in exterior things, but in interior; not in actions of the body, but in those of the soul; that is, in making in the depths of our souls, acts of the virtues, in uniting ourselves interiorly to God who is within us by acts of faith, hope, and charity; in having in all our actions pure intentions, and in performing all our works in view and remembrance of the presence of God. Because all in the spiritual life is hidden it is called the spiritual life rather than the physical or corporal life, the interior life instead of the exterior. The Royal Prophet expresses this thought when he says: "All the glory of the king's daughter is within." (Ps. xliv. 14.) All the glory and beauty of the king's daughter, the just soul, is within, not without. The prophet says all, not a part; so the spiritual man conceals under a common and often abject exterior, an interior quite divine, by which he produces extraordinary and admirable operations.

Isaiah says: "Thy eyes shall see thy teach-

er." (Is. xxx. 20.) Thy eyes shall see thy Preceptor who from the chair of the Eucharist gives thee this lesson and teaches thee this important truth; because under an ordinary exterior, under the accidents of bread and wine, which are such common things, he conceals the three greatest and most perfect beauties of the universe, to wit: his sacred body, his most holy soul, and his divinity; and in addition to these, the hypostatic union which is the most precious and most noble union that is possible. Thus St. Thomas tells us in his beautiful hymn:

> *"Sub diversis speciebus*
> *Signis tantum, et non rebus*
> *Latent res eximiæ."—(Lauda Sion.)*

> "Here, beneath these signs are hidden
> Priceless things, to sense forbidden;
> Signs, not things, are all we see."

Even so all the glory and excellence of the Blessed Sacrament is within, not without; and we may say to our Lord with the prophet Isaiah: "Verily thou art a hidden God." (Is. xlv. 15.)

Truly spiritual men are the same; they are, as David calls them, hidden men; what is visible is the least part of their possessions;

their glory and riches are concealed under a common appearance and ordinary ways.

We ought to learn and carefully retain this first lesson of our divine Master, namely, that our virtue and perfection do not consist in exterior things, no matter how good and holy they may appear, but in interior; in regulating, purifying, and sanctifying our thoughts, affections, desires, and impressions, and in uniting ourselves to God who is within us by secret acts of the virtues. This is why St. Paul tells us: "I say, then, walk in the spirit." (Gal. v. 16.) I warn you to walk with the spirit, and to perform all your actions like spiritual men who are prompted by interior motions of grace. The first direction for reaching perfection that Wisdom gave to Blessed Henry Suso, was, as he himself relates: "My son, study to dwell always in the depths of thy spirit, and to cultivate and polish unceasingly thy interior man."

It is by this striving after the interior life we must judge of progress in virtue and distinguish those who are truly spiritual from those who are so only in appearance, who apply themselves much more to correcting, composing, and fashioning their exterior than their interior; the really spiritual do quite

the contrary, imitating the wisdom of nature which in forming our bodies does not neglect the skin, the hair, nor the extremities, but nevertheless labors with more diligent care in perfecting the noble parts that are internal and the centres of life. The spuriously spiritual imitate art which occupies itself only with what is exterior and striking to the eye, and does not think of giving life and sentiment to its work.

2. The Second Lesson.

Our Lord in working the miracle of the Eucharist produces admirable changes, because he destroys the substances of the bread and wine, and converts them into his body and blood without touching the visible accidents of the one or the other, the color, the figure, the taste, or the odor; just, St. Thomas says, as he entered the most pure womb of his holy Mother, without tarnishing in any degree her virginity, but rather consecrating, sanctifying, and deifying it by his entrance. And truly he is powerful enough to accomplish this wonder, since, the same saint adds, we see mother-birds changing into flesh and a living bird the yolk of the egg they cover without breaking the shell; it is certainly

much easier for our Lord who is God to change the substances of bread and wine into his body without injuring the species.

Thus it is only the interior things, that is, the substances of the bread and wine that are changed and destroyed in the Eucharist, and the exterior things, as the color, figure, and other qualities, are preserved in their integrity; for there is the same whiteness, the same round figure before and after the consecration of the host. Here is a lesson which teaches us, in the first place, that Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and received by the faithful, produces in them marvelous changes for virtue and perfection. And in the second place, that these changes are interior and not exterior; for, in order to make us virtuous and perfect he does not necessarily alter our condition, our country, or our employment, but our heart; the merchant continues a merchant, the married remain married, the tradesman does not leave his shop, the exterior and visible qualities are still the same; but the interior—the thoughts, views, affections, desires and plans—become quite different. In the same manner as the body of Jesus Christ takes beneath the accidents the place of the substance of the bread which is destroyed, the spirit of

Jesus Christ, which is a spirit of humility, obedience, patience, and all the virtues, takes in the faithful who communicate the place of the spirit of the old man, a spirit of ambition, disobedience, anger, and all the vices, so that they become that new creature of whom St. Paul speaks so much, who has new eyes, new ears, new thoughts and affections, and can exclaim with the same apostle: "I live, yet not I, but Jesus Christ who liveth in me!"

Thus, then, the accidents in this divine mystery are preserved in their integrity and properties; if they are changed at all, they are only, by a glorious advantage, made much more perfect in order that they may work and act above the scope of their nature; being mere accidents, they continue to produce the effects of their own substance, though they no longer serve it, but Jesus Christ instead. In the same manner our Lord, retaining the merchant in his traffic, the artisan at his work, and the married man in his family, teaches them to perform their actions which hitherto had no purposes save those of earth, for God's glory and their own salvation.

Therefore, as the apostle counsels: "Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called." (1 Cor. vii. 20.) Let each

remain in his vocation and in the state to which he was called; let him not think of changing it, but rather of excelling in it and of performing its duties with an interior spirit. As it is the same Jesus Christ in all the Hosts, no matter of what bread they may be made, provided only it is wheaten bread, and likewise in all the wine, and in all alike he glorifies God his Father and accomplishes our salvation; so in all states of life and in all situations, however different, we may find Jesus Christ, and may advance his honor and our salvation.

3. The Third Lesson.

Our Lord in this mystery also instructs us in the very important doctrine of intentions, and makes us understand the power they have to give our actions great value and high merit.

The species of bread and wine are very common and mean things, since they are only accidents and not substances; yet notwithstanding they are so vile and abject, in the Blessed Sacrament they are by their union with the body of our Lord so elevated and ennobled as to become venerable and adorable, and to exact from those who touch or even look at them, reverences, genuflections,

and the worship of Latria; whilst without that union, they are only profane and can be touched, handled, and eaten by all indifferently and without respect. Consider the difference between a consecrated Host and one that is not consecrated. Could there be a greater?

This should teach us that our actions, however trifling they are, may become very excellent and very meritorious if we perform them through a good motive. In Christianity the intention gives its value and importance to the act. Is there anything less than a glass of water? Yet if you give it with a good intention you will in heaven receive an eternal reward. St. Isidore, to select this saint from among many who were of low condition, was a laborer; he cultivated the land, sowed, gathered the harvests, took care of horses, and performed many other humble actions belonging to his condition; by means of these, however, he became a saint, he pleased God exceedingly, and won a very high degree of glory in heaven, because he performed them with most pure and perfect intentions.

Let us do the same with regard to all our actions, however little they may be; let us seek, by performing them through the motive

of love for Jesus Christ, to have our Lord elevate them in all their parts, by a union of charity, as he elevates by a sacramental union all the parts of the species, and by that union ennobles, sanctifies, and deifies them. If there were a part that he did not unite himself with, it would not be ennobled nor sanctified, but would continue to be profane, vile, and valueless. It is the same with our actions in regard to our intentions.

Therefore bend all your efforts to obtain that your thoughts, affections, words, and all your works may be constantly animated by good intentions, that our Lord may touch them, and by his touch elevate, sanctify, and deify them; that your thoughts, your affections, and all your actions may be in some sort consecrated like the species of the Host, so as to have our Lord united to them to vivify them by his spirit. And since he is present in this adorable mystery for the glory of his Father, for your salvation, and from the love he bears you, act in all things for the glory of God, for that of our Lord, and for his love.

4. The Fourth Lesson.

Our Lord is in the Blessed Sacrament like a spirit, that is, entire in the whole Host and

entire in every one of its parts, so that there is not a single part however small it may be, of which, placing the point of a pin upon it, you may not say: Our Lord is entirely there; his head, his arms, and his feet, without separation, without confusion, and without division, are in the extremities and the circumference of the Host as well as in its centre.

From this we should learn that we ought to apply ourselves unreservedly to what we do, not alone to the whole, but to each part or portion; that we ought to be as attentive to the progress and completion of an action as to its beginning, if we would perform it well. We often fail in this through a very prejudicial illusion of the devil, detaching our thoughts and attention from a present action to bestow them upon the future; and in so far as we yield to this suggestion of our enemy, and to our own inconstancy, we perform the present action badly, and the future one no better, because when its time comes, through the same artifice and the same inconstancy, we think only of what is yet to follow. Let us keep to what we are doing, let us think of no more than is necessary to accomplish it well; each thing should have its time and proper attention.

Moreover, when a Host is broken, our Lord is not broken nor bruised with the species, but he always remains in his integrity, and is entire in each part.

"*Fracto demum Sacramento*
Ne vacilles, sed memento
Tantum esse sub fragmento,
Quantum toto tegitur.

Nulla rei fit scissura,
Signi tantum fit fractura.
Qua nec status nec statura
Signati minuitur."

"Not a single doubt retain,
When they break the Host in twain,
But that in each part remains
What was in the whole before.

Since the simple sign alone
Suffers change in state or form,
The Signified remaining one
And the same forevermore,"

sings St. Thomas in his celebrated hymn. Neither more nor less than one sees his whole face in each part of a broken mirror, so, if our condition obliges us to employ ourselves in several different occupations, and, as it were, to divide and share ourselves, this division should be only exterior, and not interior and in the spirit, which should ever continue recollected, and should invariably act in the pres-

ence of God and for the single purpose of his glory.

5. The Fifth Lesson.

This lesson is one of very high perfection, because it inculcates our self-annihilation, in which the height of perfection consists. Thus the blessed in heaven are perfect because God is their all in all, and they are nothing in anything to themselves. "All in all," as St. Paul says. (1 Cor. xv. 28.) In the same manner we here below are perfect according as we are no longer our own, but God's.

Our Lord teaches this exalted doctrine in the Blessed Sacrament, where, as well as in the mystery of his Incarnation and in that of his death, these words of the apostle may be applied to him: "He emptied himself." (Philipp. ii. 7.)

Our Lord empties himself in this adorable mystery, first, by descending to earth and uniting himself, glorious as he is, to a most vile thing, that is to say, to the accidents of bread and wine, and not to the substance which is nobler. Secondly, by hiding his body his soul, his divinity, and all that he is, under the species of a little host, in such a manner that nothing of him appears. Third-

ly, by putting himself, though he is living and immortal, in the host in a state of death, for a representation of the death he suffered on the cross. Fourthly, although he possesses in the Blessed Sacrament his body, his eyes, his ears, and all his senses, he annihilates himself, by remaining there as though his body were not a body but a spirit, occupying no space as a body naturally does; he has eyes with which he does not see, he has ears but without hearing, a tongue without speech, a palate that does not taste, and all his other faculties of sensation which perform no functions; he has a body that does not lead a bodily life.* Thus he is marvelously annihilated.

To all this let us add the prodigious annihilations of humility, obedience, and patience that our Lord practices in the Blessed Sacrament.

What humility to place his infinite majesty, to conceal his resplendent glory under a veil so contemptible as the species! to despoil his body, that miracle of corporal beauty, of all its attractions, and to reduce it to a point! Thus is the God of glory humbled; thus is the Infinite Majesty brought to a state of ex-

* It may be well to remark here that theologians differ in their opinions regarding this.—*Translator.*

treme and continual abasement, and that in innumerable places, for love of us, and to teach us to abase and humble ourselves for him!

How great is his obedience, he whose sovereignty and absolute power extends over all the universe, to respond at the moment named, without delay, to the simple words of a priest who calls him to descend from heaven and place himself beneath the species of bread and wine, and keep himself inseparably united to them in whatever place they may be put, no matter what indignity may be offered to him, until they are decomposed! And perhaps it is his mortal enemy who consecrates for devilish intentions, who makes him come so far and as often as he wills in order to do him outrage! What an example of obedience!

His patience in this mystery is inexplicable, his patience in suffering so many injuries from men in the very mystery where they owe him most, in the mystery where, as but a thousandth part of a just gratitude, he should receive from them only all kinds of veneration, homage, and service. Instead of this, he receives scorn, insults, and opprobrium from infidels and heretics who do not believe this

mystery, who cast him to the earth, trample him under foot, and treat him with horrible and abominable indignities. He suffers from the faithful who receive him in mortal sin, and in venial sin committed through want of preparation and the requisite attention and devotion, and by hearing Mass irreverently. His best friends even cause him to suffer because they do not fully acquit themselves of their duty in the participation of this divine Sacrament.

He suffers greatly in this Sacrament from all classes of persons on account of the little change it produces in them. If he were capable of experiencing a displeasure, it would be to him a most sensible one to see this so powerful a means to our salvation, this Sacrament in which he dwells with so ardent a desire of sanctifying us and communicating to us the fruits of his passion and death, effecting so little. The devils of the famous possession of Loudun, after having said of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament many very beautiful and very excellent things, gave him a name disrespectful for him and shameful for us, a name signifying that, after all, he gains by means of the Blessed Sacrament little from us for his glory and our perfection in compari-

son with what he deserves, and what he could effect if we placed no obstacles in his way.

Is it not also a great exercise of patience for our Lord to remain entire days and nights quite alone, to be visited by no one, on this throne of his love, whither he has descended in order to visit us and to enrich us with his gifts?

Our Lord excercises in like manner all the other virtues, as may be easily remarked by whosoever will take a little pains to consider them. Assuredly, therefore, it is upon our altars that we must seek the school of perfection; and we must avow that, as the Sacrifice thereon offered is the same in essence as that of the cross, the most excellent examples of virtue the Son of God has left us, are those he gave from the cross and daily gives us in the Eucharist, where he not only places them before our eyes that we may see them, but furnishes us the grace and strength necessary to imitate them.

Behold, then, the lessons of perfection which our divine Master gives us from the chair of the Eucharist. It remains for us to study them and put them in practice. Let us make ourselves docile hearers and true disciples of this Master, who, being Incarnate Wisdom, and

teaching us from such a chair and in so beautiful a manner, merits our fullest confidence, and deserves that in obedience to his doctrine we should undertake the perfectly spiritual life he sets before us.

This is in fact the life of true Christians. St. Paul says of himself and of all: "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh." (2 Cor. x. 3.) And again: "We walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit." (Rom. viii. 4.) Even while we have bodies and senses we live as though we had none, because we do not follow their inclinations, but we live and perform all our actions according to the spirit of Jesus Christ and the motions of grace. Addressing the Roman Christians, the same apostle says: "You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit." (Rom. viii. 9.) You are in the flesh without being of it, because you are in the spirit acting spiritually.

St. Justin, martyr, in answering Diognetus, Minister of State under Marcus Aurelius, who had asked him what sort of people the Christians were, and in what they differed from other people, wrote to him that they were a new species of men differing from others not in country or condition, but in habits of life;

for, while other men lived according to the flesh, the Christians lived according to the spirit, and had all their conversation in heaven.

It is true that in order to lead this life of the spirit we must entirely separate ourselves from the things to which we are by nature attached, and must rise high above ourselves, above the body and its senses, above the lower part of the soul, to live only according to the higher part and according to the spirit.

The spirit lives in those three excellent and divine manners of which Richard of St. Victor and St. Bonaventure speak, and which they call "the spirit in the spirit, the spirit above the spirit, and the spirit without the spirit." (Richard L. de Trinit. prolog.—L. 3, De contempl. c. 12.—Bonav. De sept. itin. acter. d. 3, prol.) The spirit is in the spirit when, abandoning the inordinate care of its body and all exterior things, it retires into itself to attend to its own needs, and to God who is within it, and to apply itself to spiritual and divine things. The spirit is above the spirit when it contemns and forgets itself, and, by the force of its love and the ardor of its desires, leaving itself, it hurries away and takes its flight toward God, to be employed only in

thinking of him and in loving him alone. Finally, the spirit is without the spirit when it not only leaves itself to rise above itself, but comes even to fade away and lose in some sort its being, because it passes into another and an incomparably nobler and more perfect state, fulfilling the mystical words of the prophet Abdias: "They shall drink and sup up, and they shall be as though they were not." (Abd. i. 16.)

Water may be thus considered in three manners: either as water in water, that is in its fountain; or as water above water, that is above its nature when by the action of fire it is heated, expanded, and converted into steam; or as water without water when it is mingled in a small quantity with a great deal of wine, and, according to some, preserves its essence, but loses its name, color, and qualities, to take those of the wine, which are much superior.

This life of separation, elevation, and annihilation of self cannot be acquired without great effort. But as our Lord gives us the example of this life in his person in the Blessed Sacrament, he also gives us the assistance we need in order to practice it; and the special grace of this mystery is to pro-

duce it, and so to render us spiritual in a high degree.

The two principal effects of the Eucharist are, first, to unite us with our Lord as he unites himself to us, whence it is called *communion*, as we have already remarked; and secondly, to enable us to lead a life perfectly spiritual, and elevated above the senses and all material things, a life modeled upon that which our Lord leads in the Blessed Sacrament.

When you have communicated you are filled with Jesus Christ entire, because you possess his body, his soul, his divinity, and all that he is. Being thus filled with Jesus Christ, this divine plenitude should spread over your soul, your body, and your senses, to impress upon them a disposition of conformity to him, and to communicate to them his virtues; so that you may be united with him as he is with you, and that in your body and in the use of your senses you may lead a spiritual, an elevated life, upon the model of his, a life above your body and your senses, so far as Christian perfection demands it of you in your actual condition.

6. Good use of the Blessed Sacrament.

This point is of infinite importance. As our Lord's passion and death is the mystery of our

salvation and happiness, and the most abundant application of its fruits, and the broadest channel through which its merits flow to us, is the worthy reception of the Blessed Sacrament, it is evident that we ought to do all in our power to receive it worthily.

Besides, the sacraments of the New Law act according to the dispositions of those that receive them. Science teaches, and experience confirms, that the better and more useful things are when they preserve their nature, the more injurious and hurtful they are when they lose it. We see this in the human body which, being the most beautiful and perfect of all bodies so long as it is alive and healthy, is the ugliest and most infectious when after death it decomposes. There is nothing sweeter than honey, and also nothing more bitter when it is corrupted. "*Corruptio optimi pessima*—The worst corruption is that of what is best," says the proverb. Hence it follows that the Blessed Sacrament being the best food our souls can receive, the most efficacious means of our salvation, the most powerful remedy for all our ills, the most sovereign balm for all our wounds, and the bond that binds and unites us most closely to our Lord, when we approach it with the requisite dispositions,

produces in us quite contrary effects if we are not properly disposed, if we are in a bad state; for, instead of drawing us to our Lord and uniting us with him, it disunites and separates us from him; instead of strengthening, it weakens us; it is no longer for us a means of salvation, but a cause of ruin and an instrument of God's vengeance, we no longer find in it an elixir of health, a spring of life, but a deadly poison. An ancient Father says: "We daily behold a lamentable sight in those who approach the most sacred banquet of the Eucharist; we see some among them growing worse, and by their bad use of it hastening rapidly to their damnation and to eternal flames." (Philo. Carpath.) They are like the unfortunate Aman, who was led from Queen Esther's banquet to the gibbet.

Therefore we should exert all our efforts to communicate as perfectly as we are able, as regards alike the preparation, the reception, and the thanksgiving; but, since I have in another work spoken at length of what is necessary in order to do this, we will not here dwell upon it. Nevertheless, to animate us to new efforts, and to show us still better how to unite ourselves with our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist, I will say two things:

The first is concerning the exterior and the interior of the mystery. The exterior consists in the accidents of the bread that strike the senses, the color, odor, taste, and form, and also in the presence, though invisible, of the body of our Lord under these accidents, where he takes the place of the substance of the bread which is destroyed.

The interior, according to what we said in Chapter I., consists in the thoughts our Lord has in this mystery. We should reflect that as our Lord is in the Host living and glorious, and that consequently he has the use of his mind, he certainly thinks of something. If you ask me of what, I reply that he thinks of accomplishing the most adorable mystery and the greatest sacrament of his Church; of representing for the glory of his Father and the salvation of men his passion and death which were the acts most glorious to the Divinity, and most profitable to the human race that were ever performed.

He thinks of men, since it is for them he is there; and he thinks of you in particular, he is attentive to you, he applies himself to you, occupies himself with you; so when you are before the Blessed Sacrament, and when you look upon it, you should be persuaded that

our Lord who is hidden behind the species, looks at you, most surely thinks of you, and keeps his mind fixed on your person.

But what does he think of me, you ask. Listen to what he tells you by Jeremiah: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of affliction, to give you an end and patience. You shall pray to me and I will hear you; you shall seek me, and shall find me when you shall seek me with all your heart." (Jer. xxix. 11, 12, 13.) The Lord says to you: I have for you thoughts of peace and not of affliction, thoughts of love, mercy, and pity. I think of delivering you from your miseries and bestowing upon you my blessings; and because you must suffer as well as I, I think of giving you a happy end of your tribulations, and patience in your trials. I think of granting you what you ask of me, of allowing you to find me when you seek me, of breaking your chains and setting you at liberty.

Moreover our Lord has for you in the Blessed Sacrament the thoughts of a father, a mother, a spouse, and a sincere friend; thoughts of kindness, liberality, munificence, and infinite profusion of all he possesses, in order to enrich you with the treasures of

his grace and prepare you for those of his glory.

He thinks of giving you his flesh and blood, his body and soul, his humanity and divinity, to nourish you, strengthen you, justify, sanctify, and deify you.

He thinks of making plainly known to the whole universe the incomparable love he bears you, which caused him to invent so wonderful a means of enabling you to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and this so frequently and without apprehension or disgust, in order to reproduce in you in a certain manner the mystery of his Incarnation and to apply to you abundantly the fruits of his death, in order to enter your body and soul really and substantially and to unite himself intimately with you—that love which prompted him to bring all this to pass, to work in himself, and in nature, unheard-of things, to exert the greatest efforts of his omnipotence.

Thus he thinks of you. On your side, think of him and address him in these words of David: "Thou hast multiplied thy wonderful works, O Lord my God; and in thy thoughts there is no one like to thee." (Ps. xxxix. 6.)

Thou, my Lord and my God, hast done for me many wonderful things, and strange acts

of providence and love; and the thoughts thou hast for my salvation are beyond all that can be expressed.

Again address him in these words of Isaiah: "O Lord, thou art my God, I will exalt thee, and give glory to thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, thy designs of old faithful, amen. Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the whirlwind, a shadow from the heat." (Is. xxv. 1, 4.)

O Lord, thou art my God. I declare aloud to all the universe that I recognize and hold thee for my God. I will praise thee, I will honor thee, and I will bless thy holy name because thou doest wonders for me, and hast old and faithful thoughts of kindness toward me, and cares tenderer than those of a father or a mother. Thou dost render thyself in this mystery where I behold thee, the strength of the weak, the riches of the poor, and the refuge of the needy in their misfortunes. Thou art a shelter from the tempests, a cover from the fierce heats of temptation, from persecution, and from all evil.

Do thus, so that you may say with the spouse of the Canticle: "My beloved to me, and I to him. I to my beloved, and his turn-

ing is toward me." (Cant. ii. 16; vii. 10.) My beloved is mine and I am his; he thinks of me and I think of him; he is attentive to me and I am attentive to him.

The next point to consider regarding the interior of the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist, is the affections that therein move our Lord's will; these are a burning zeal for the glory of God, an ardent, tender, caressing love for you, a love that overcomes all difficulties, works miracles, and is constant and unchangeable; an earnest desire to be united to you and to have you united with him so that he and you should be but one, thus accomplishing his promise that whosoever should eat his flesh and drink his blood should have with him a union so close and intimate that the one would abide and live in the other, and that he would enable the creature honored by such a union to lead a pure, holy, and divine life like unto his own (Jno. vi. 57); and finally, a strong desire that all Christians should be united among themselves by the bond of a most perfect charity.

The third point is our Lord's most pure intentions for the glory of God, and for our good, our salvation, sanctification, and deification, the ends for which he instituted the

Blessed Sacrament and for which he dwells in it.

The fourth point is the virtues which he there exercises in their highest degree, humility, obedience, patience, meekness, annihilation of self, freedom of spirit, and several others.

The fifth is the grace he has merited for us, and gives us that we may faithfully correspond to his dispositions in this mystery, imitate the virtues he teaches us in it, and sanctify ourselves by making a worthy use of it.

My second remark is that one of the most astonishing things in the Church is that our Lord being truly received in the Blessed Sacrament, and received with all his gifts, all his merits, and all his treasures, and burning with the desire of communicating them to us abundantly, of bestowing them upon us in profusion, and received so frequently, nevertheless produces in us so little effect, and that we still find ourselves after so many communions so poor, so destitute of real virtue and so full of faults.

Is it not like saying that the sun does not give light, fire does not warm, the abundance of treasures does not enrich, strength does not

strengthen, perfection does not make perfect? To say this would appear very strange.

We see the effects of the sun upon the earth. It is the sun that produces by means of other secondary causes the plants, the flowers, animals, stones, metals, and everything in the material world; we find his heat so intense in midsummer that we cannot remain exposed to his rays without being scorched; yet he is so distant that there are more than ninety millions of miles between him and us. What, then, would happen to the earth, how would we not be burned if the sun should approach but one-half nearer? If he should come close to us we would in an instant be in flames, we would be consumed like straw and reduced to ashes.

Why may we not say the same of our Lord? Is he not the Sun of Justice? Has he not as much and infinitely more heat and power to make himself felt in our souls, than the material sun has to act upon our bodies? Whence is it that being so powerful, and not far distant from us, but near us, even within us, he effects so little? So far from inflaming and burning us, he does not even warm us.

Our Lord said that his flesh was truly a food, a meat capable of producing in our souls

the effects that material food has upon our bodies, namely, nourishment and strength. Where are these effects? A morsel of dry and inanimate bread often strengthens your body more, and a glass of water refreshes it more than Jesus Christ, his body, soul, divinity, with all his merits and all his power, strengthen your soul.

Are you contented to remain always the same? Are you not willing to dispose yourself so that the Blessed Sacrament may do as much for your soul as a morsel of black bread does for your body?

He who enters within you is Jesus Christ, the omnipotent God, who can, if you desire, deliver you from your vices and make you virtuous and perfect. It is he who from the beginning of the world has justified all the just, sanctified all the saints, and perfected all the perfect. It is he who inspired the martyrs and gave them their fortitude, who imparted to the confessors their devotion and to the virgins their purity.

He is willing, assuredly, to produce in you in some degree the same effects; he desires it ardently, as he proves by the prodigies he has performed to establish the Eucharist.

A single reception of our Lord, a single

Communion, would be enough, if you were excellently disposed, to make you holy, and to cause you to lead ever after a life altogether perfect and divine. And you have received him so many times, yet no such results have appeared! So many journeys that he has made from heaven to earth for you, so many miracles that he has worked in himself and in nature, have produced nothing in you!

Do you not think that it pains the Son of God, if we may so speak, after having given you, after giving you so frequently, so powerful a remedy for your infirmities, so efficacious a means of acquiring humility, obedience, patience, detachment from creatures, and perfection, to gain nothing in you, to see his journeys lost, to be thus deceived in his expectations and frustrated in his most ardent desires?

Reflect that the devil asks nothing better; for as he hates our Lord with a mortal hatred and is the sworn enemy of his glory, he is very glad to see that this means of our salvation wherein our Lord abides in person, where he lavishes the treasures of his wisdom and goodness, where he displays his power by the miracles he works, and where he applies himself with so much affection to the affair of

our sanctification, does not succeed, effects nothing in us, but leaves us as imperfect as it found us. I say nothing here of your own disadvantage nor of the loss you sustain, which it is impossible to estimate.

But whence arises this misfortune, why is it that our Lord accomplishes so little in us by means of the Blessed Sacrament? It comes from our negligence; it is because we approach the Holy Table without preparation, through custom and routine; because we receive slothfully and with a certain vicious insensibility, without reflection and without devotion; because after having received we leave our Lord quite alone, and do not ask him to penetrate our soul, to purify and sanctify it; because we do not take pains to keep him with us and to employ well the precious moments of his stay when he is more ready than ever to enrich us with his gifts and load us with his graces, since his only purpose in coming to us was to bestow them upon us. Even as the material sun produces its effects only according to the dispositions or qualities of the objects it shines upon—we see it at the same time and with the same ray melting wax and hardening the earth—so the Sun of Justice acts differently upon souls according as they are prepared.

Therefore let us awaken from our slumbers, and let us chase away the sloth in which our souls have so long stagnated, let us approach the Blessed Sacrament with more care and with a more lively devotion than in the past, and let us make great efforts to render ourselves worthy to receive its fruits abundantly.

Let us take our Lord himself as our model for this great act. How does he prepare on his part to execute it? What extraordinary and unprecedented things does he not do in order to dispose himself for visiting us in this august mystery, and in order to apply to us its fruits? If we consider what he does outside of himself we shall see him working astounding miracles, overthrowing all the laws of nature, operating greater prodigies in the destruction of the substances, in the disunion of the accidents, in the consecration he makes of them, in the strength he gives them, and in many other ways, than Moses ever performed in Egypt.

If we consider what he effects in himself, we shall behold ravishing wonders. He places his body, his soul, and his divinity, the three most brilliant and glorious things in all the universe, under the species of a little host without brilliancy or glory; he reduces his

body to a point, his living and immortal body to a state-like death, his body visible and sensible in itself to the inability of being seen or perceived by any sense; and being absolute Lord of the universe, and consequently perfectly independent of his creatures, he wills nevertheless, in order to come to us in this sacrament, to depend on the word of a priest who may sometimes be his bitterest enemy; and he wills to remain in this sacrament in a state of dependence on the accidents.

See how our Lord disposes himself for this mystery, and how we also after his example should dispose ourselves, doing great things within and without us. We should never approach it without having first prepared by some signal act of virtue, without having purchased our Communion and the possession of the Son of God with some heroic victory over ourselves.

When you have received Communion be very careful to render it effectual and a means to virtue and perfection, in this also copying our Lord who, after having instituted the Blessed Sacrament and communicated himself, went to the Garden of Olives to pray, and thence to his passion and death.

We have already said what is true, that one

of the most abundant sources of the little benefit we draw from Holy Communion is our negligence, after having received, in entertaining our Lord, and in profiting by the precious moments of his visit; for often after a short prayer carelessly said, or a cold and formal conversation with our Lord, we leave him, and immediately divert ourselves with other things. It is easy for any one willing to reflect ever so superficially on the nature of things, to understand that to proceed in this way will be of no profit; if the food you eat does not remain some time in your stomach, and is not there converted into chyle, and then into blood to be distributed through your whole body, it is useless to you; the same thing is true of the divine food of the Eucharist.

Therefore apply your whole attention most diligently to the Blessed Sacrament after you have received, being persuaded that the profit you derive will be greater or less according to your application; and remembering, to incite you to closer attention, that then is the time of divine liberality and profusion, that it is then only we hold our Lord, possess him, and can unite ourselves in the most perfect manner to his sacred humanity; that it is then

the soul may drink from the side of our Lord, that she may draw from that divine fountain the waters of life, that she may gather abundantly the fruits of his passion and death, that she may sprinkle herself with his blood, that she may wash in it and be purified and sanctified, that she may approach that fire which makes seraphim on earth as well as in heaven, and the flames of which will enkindle in her heart a love that will extinguish the love of creatures, that she may expose herself to the Sun of Justice, who with his rays will illumine, vivify, and strengthen her, pouring upon her his clear light, and rendering her divine; and finally, that it is then that opening her ears to this great and only Master she may hear in his secret and mystic school the sublime lessons of Christian perfection which he does not teach to the wise of the world.

After your conversation with our Lord, look to the effects. St. Augustine says: "Let him who receives Life," that is the Holy Eucharist, for so the Fathers named it, "determine to change his life; for if he does not change his life, and correct his conduct, he receives Life to his condemnation, and he will grow worse rather than better from having received it, and

will gain death instead of life." (Aug. opp. t. v. App. Serm. cxv.)

For this reason the Eucharist is also called the Passover, which means passage, because it should cause us to pass from sin to grace, from vice to virtue, and from faults to perfection.

Let the faithful soul then who receives, who eats the Passover, think of accomplishing these mystical passages, and of producing these changes of conduct in himself; let him go with our Lord to the Garden of Olives by prayer and recollection, and thence to the passion and death of his ruined nature, by the exercise of humility, obedience, charity, forgiveness of injuries, and the other virtues, in the highest degree of their excellence; so that like Elias, a figure of this mystery, who, strengthened and refreshed by the bread the angel gave him, walked forty days and forty nights until he came to the high mountain of Horeb (3 Kings xix. 8), he, too, supported and strengthened by the sacred bread of the Eucharist, may constantly go onward during the whole course of his life, by day and night, in light and darkness, prosperity and adversity, until he reaches the mountain of perfection to which God calls him.

7. Good use of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

To animate ourselves to make a good use of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we need only consider its infinite excellence and the inestimable treasures of blessings it brings us.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is indeed the grandest, the most august, and the most venerable act of our religion; it is the sublimest and most exalted action that is performed in the universe; it is the most glorious to God, the most agreeable to our Lord, to our Lady, and to the whole Church triumphant; it is the most useful to the Church militant, and affords most aid and solace to the Church suffering; and to each one of us individually it is of the greatest value for our advancement in virtue, and our salvation.

The Sacrifice of the Mass contains and unites in itself all the sacrifices of the Old Law, which were but diminutive pictures and faint shadows of it. Thus it is a holocaust of infinite adoration, by which we acknowledge God as our first principle, the cause of our bodies and souls, and all that we are; as our sovereign Lord who has the right to dispose of us as he pleases without our resisting in any manner whatsoever; and as our Last

End for whom we were created, and in whose service we should incessantly occupy and consume ourselves. It is a sacrifice of infinite propitiation, by which we appease the anger of God irritated against us on account of our offences, and obtain pardon of them. It is a eucharistic sacrifice, capable of rendering him infinite thanksgivings for all the benefits he has bestowed upon us, and a sacrifice of impetration infinitely powerful to obtain from him fresh benefits.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is something so honorable and glorious to God, that a single Mass said by a wicked priest for infamous intentions, procures him more honor and glory than all the blessed will throughout eternity; because all the honor they render him and will render him, has, and will always have, limits as coming from limited or finite creatures; but the honor the Mass procures him is absolutely infinite, because it is Jesus Christ, his Son and the first priest, who offers it to him in person by the effective sacrifice of himself, a sacrifice which is not different in essence, but only in some accidental formalities, from that of his cross and death.

All these reasons clearly show us the great care we should take to make a good use of

this adorable Sacrifice for the glory of God and our own salvation, offering it ourselves and saying Mass if we are priests, or hearing it, or very frequently during the day presenting it in spirit to God, for the intentions for which it was instituted.

We will not explain here how this should be done, because we have treated of the subject in another work, to which we refer our present readers. (See "*The Knowledge and Love of our Lord Jesus Christ*," B. III. c. x. p. 14.)

I will only add in this place that the Mass being the same act which our Lord performed in the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament on the evening of his Last Supper, an act which contained in itself an infinity of wonders, and was identical with the one he performed on the cross when he sacrificed himself and died for the honor of his Father and the salvation of men, we should unite ourselves to it with sentiments of extraordinary devotion.

To say Mass wherein is contained both the sacrament and the sacrifice, is to do what our Lord did at the Last Supper and on the cross. To hear Mass is to do what our Lady did at the foot of the cross, where she shared the dispositions of her Son, co-operated in the

offering he made of himself to God his Father, and offered herself likewise to him.

Consider when you go to Mass that you are going to assist at the grandest and most admirable action that can be performed in heaven or on earth; you are going to witness the execution, the murder, the putting to death of the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, and the King of kings, by representation in his own person; you are going to see him die for your salvation and your love. Is not this enough to dispose you to say or hear Mass in a most perfect manner?

Therefore, in conclusion, let us attach ourselves with the deepest affection to the holy Eucharist, whether as a Sacrament or a Sacrifice. Let us breathe our Lord and draw him into us in this divine mystery; let us unite ourselves to him by faith, respect, and adoration, by frequent visits, by worthy sacramental and spiritual communions, and by all the means we can devise, so that in this union he may communicate to us according to his desires and the end for which he instituted the Eucharist, his divinity, his humanity, his merits, his graces, and his gifts, which will enable us to imitate his life.

Consider the excellence of a consecrated Host, and the perfection acquired by the accidents of the bread and wine from their being united to Jesus Christ in this sacrament. So long as they are united to bread and wine they are vile and abject; their natural union with their own substance constitutes their vileness and meanness; but by being separated from it and united to our Lord, they are ennobled, sanctified, and raised to an inestimable dignity, and to a power of producing marvelous effects which without this union they could never possess. Even such is the difference between a man consecrated by the presence of and union with Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and the same man when he is not so consecrated.

Finally, let us make the Blessed Sacrament our school, our asylum, our altar of refuge, our arsenal, our medicine, our banquet, our delight, our happiness, our paradise, and our heaven on earth, that we may draw from it our instruction, our light, our defence, our strength, our health, our nourishment, and all that we need, inasmuch as our Lord is there to confer upon us all these blessings.

IV.—MEDITATIONS.

What has been said may serve as subjects for meditation; if it is not sufficient, there are several books from which you may select your subjects.

V.—READING.

Again see this heading in Chapter III.

VI.—ASPIRATORY VERSES.

"My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (Jno. vi. 56.)

"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him." (Jno. vi. 57.) He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwells in me, and I in him. Is this so? Can I testify this of myself with truth? Do I dwell in Jesus Christ by thoughts, desires, love, and preference of him to all the things of earth? And he, does he dwell in me, in my body to purify it, in my soul to sanctify it, in my understanding to enlighten it, in my will to quicken it, in my passions to rule them, in my eyes, in my ears, in my tongue, and in all my senses to govern their movements? If I do not experience this, but on the contrary am sure that the case is quite

different, what is the cause? Is Jesus Christ a liar, to promise a thing that is impossible? Or rather do I make it impossible by the obstacles I interpose?

"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." (Jno. vi. 58.) As my Father has sent me and willed me to lead his divine life, I communicate that life to him that eateth me. Oh! incomparable effect of the Blessed Sacrament! He who receives it must lead the life of the Son of God, if the Son of God speaks truly. Where is that divine life I lead? Is my life always even a reasonable life? It is not often a passionate life, an animal life? What then have so many Communions during so many years accomplished in me, a single one of which, if it had been excellently made, might have raised me to the highest sanctity? Henceforth let us endeavor to bring to order so great an irregularity, and find an efficacious remedy for so dangerous a disease.

"As often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until he come." (1 Cor. xi. 26.) As often as you shall communicate you shall show forth the Lord's death. That is, accord-

ing to St. Thomas, you shall represent in your interior and exterior Jesus Christ crucified, and shall express in yourself by imitation the virtues he exercised in his passion and death.

Observe that each Communion should accomplish these effects in you; and every time that you have communicated remember to say to yourself frequently during the day: I must to-day represent in myself the death of our Lord, and express in my actions his humility, his obedience, his patience, his meekness, his charity, and the other virtues he practiced on the cross.

"But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the chalice; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself." (1 Cor. xi. 28, 29.) Let him that desires to approach this divine table, enter into himself, and examine and see if he is worthy; if he is, let him eat this bread and drink this chalice; if he is not, let him beware of touching it, otherwise he may be certain that he eats and drinks his judgment and condemnation, that instead of receiving life he will find death.

"The Lord wakeneth me in the morning, in the morning he wakeneth my ear that I may hear him as a master; I do not resist." (Ex.

Is. l. 4, 5.) Our Lord residing in the Blessed Sacrament awakens me early in the morning and seizes my ear, so that I may listen to him as to my master who gives me excellent lessons in the practice of the virtues and in perfection. I do not contradict him, I do not resist him, I do not refuse to believe what he tells me, nor to do what he teaches me.

In conclusion, owing, as you do, a singular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, be careful to practice it especially during the entire octave of Corpus Christi, a season when we should keep as much as possible in our Lord's company, and for long periods expose ourselves to the Sun of Justice to be illumined, and to the Divine Fire to be warmed and consumed. We should gaze in astonishment at a God burning with love for us upon our altars, we should thereon regard with eyes of veneration this great mystery of our faith, this powerful motive of our hope, this sharp sting of our love, this excellent pattern of all virtues, and this perfect model of all the actions of our lives. We should likewise do the same in due proportion during the other seasons of the year.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRACTICE OF UNION WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST, BY THE VIRTUE OF FAITH.

I.—THE SUBJECT.

Since the Holy Ghost descended upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost to impress on their hearts, and on the hearts of all men who should come after them, the New Law, the law of grace and perfection, and to make them true Christians; and since faith, hope, and charity are the three virtues by which true Christians are especially made and formed, and which they exercise more carefully than all the others as being the most excellent and most perfect; we have judged it useful and proper to adopt these virtues as the subject of our exercises for the remainder of the year, referring them chiefly to the holy Eucharist in order not to divert ourselves from that consideration, but to ground us more and more in the worship of our Lord, and to unite us more and more closely with him in that adorable mystery. We will begin with Faith.

EXERCISE ON FAITH.

Faith is the first of the three Theological Virtues. It enables us to believe firmly and with an unalterable persuasion, all the truths that God has revealed to us, either directly, or through his organs, that is, the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apostles of the Church.

Faith is the foundation and the commencement, the gate-way of our salvation, the source of our happiness, the principle, rule, and measure of all our virtues; for we will have as much hope, as much charity, as much humility, and as much patience as we shall have lively faith.

Faith is the greatest ornament of our souls, the one that purifies and ennobles them more than all human sciences. It has wondrous eyes that do not rest on the exterior appearance of things, but penetrate their interior even to their depths; that do not look upon the present, but the future; that do not consider nature, but grace and glory—not time, but eternity. Gazing at the Eucharist they do not notice the color, the figure, the odor, nor the taste, as the senses do, but pass beyond and discover beneath these accidents the Son of God who there hides himself for us. Neither

the world and its noise, nor walls, nor doors, nor tabernacles, nor veils, nor ciboriums, nor the species, nor any other obstacle or partition, prevent them from beholding our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament; they see him there as clearly and distinctly a hundred leagues off as at only two steps distance; the distance of places does not deprive them of their vision, for, far more than the eyes of the lynx, they pierce everywhere.

Still more, Faith has powerful arms with which it performs signal and heroic deeds. It was with these arms that the saints attacked and overthrew their vices, that they acquired virtues and exercised good works, that they combated and gained the victory over the world, the flesh, and all the enemies of their salvation, and that they conquered to themselves the eternal kingdom. "By faith," says St. Paul, "they conquered kingdoms and wrought justice." (Hebr. xi. 33.)

Pure, naked, and blind faith is the faith of great souls, which in its whole and in each of its parts is faith and nothing else, which seeks and desires no other support or reason for believing, and believing everything no matter how elevated above our senses and our minds, than God's word alone, to which it submits

with closed eyes. This faith is the principle, rule, and measure of all the other virtues, and its absence is the source whence flow all our miseries. "They believed not for his wondrous works, and their days were consumed in vanity," David said of the Israelites. (Ps. lxxvii. 32.) The same may be said of Christians, because they have not firmly believed the wonders he has worked in their favor, nor given credence to his truths; they have spent their days in vanities, and have consumed their lives in follies and in all sorts of vices.

The exercise, then, of this month will be to make earnest acts of this virtue in reference to the principal doctrines of our religion, and particularly in reference to the doctrine of the Eucharist.

These principal doctrines are contained in the Apostles' Creed, and to them must be added the doctrine of the presence of God everywhere, both without us and within us, this doctrine being the broadest and most universal principle of the spiritual life, serving as a foundation for all the actions of the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive states; that of the existence of God and of our nothingness, which is the root of Christian humility; that of God's providence over us,

which is the source of all the true joy we can possess in this life; and others that we have indicated in those places where we have spoken of this virtue.

But the chief object of these acts will be the most holy sacrament of the altar, which among all our mysteries is pre-eminently called *mysterium fidei*, —the mystery of faith, because it exacts of us a very great submission of intellect and demands that we renounce in the most absolute manner all our natural, as well as all our acquired knowledge, and all our experience, and that we close the eyes and ears of our senses so as neither to see nor hear the judgments they would form if left to themselves.

The truths of our religion are all equally certain, but they are not all equally easy to be understood. There are some that are clear, the comprehension of which is not beyond the capacity of our minds; for example, the existence of a God who created the universe, that there is but one God, and that he is good, wise, powerful, and just. There are other truths that have been made visible, palpable, that have fallen under the senses of men; such are the mystery of our Lord's humanity, his birth, his circumcision, his miracles, his preaching,

his life, death, ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. Others, again, are obscure and elevated far above and beyond the power of our understanding and of our senses; such as the unity of one God in three equal persons, and the incarnation of the Word; still, these are not directly opposed to our understanding, and the Doctors of the Church teach that among natural phenomena there are things analagous to these truths which by certain traits of resemblance facilitate our belief in them.

But of all our mysteries the most obscure, the one that is shrouded in the thickest darkness, is the mystery of the Eucharist; for it is not only above our minds and senses, but is seemingly against them, inasmuch as it proposes to us a *transubstantiation*, the change of one entire composite body into another; a body existing in several places at the same time; a body deprived of exterior extension, but preserving each member in its natural place; a body reduced to a point; a body entire in the whole and entire in each part of the host, after the manner of spirits; a body sensible and palpable in itself, yet present insensibly and impalpably; a body having eyes

without sight,* ears without hearing, a tongue without speech, and accidents without their substance yet producing the effects of it.

These are wonders that astonish us, overthrow all our scientific theories, and set at naught all the evidences of our senses. If we consult our sciences, if we ask our senses, their judgment of a consecrated Host, whether they consider that an entire man is contained in it, they will reply that it is folly to think of such a thing, that the body of a man is not so formed and cannot be enclosed in such narrow limits; that certainly and evidently it is only bread, and that the color, odor, and taste show this beyond a doubt.

It is, then, chiefly in this adorable mystery that faith wins her greatest victories over our judgment and our senses; it is here she triumphs with most glory and erects her most magnificent trophies.

The beloved disciple tells us: "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." (1 Jno. v. 4.) Faith is the glorious conqueror of the world and of the human intellect.

The pious and learned William, Bishop of Paris, supposes Faith to say in this connection:

* This is an opiuion.—*Vide Franzelin de Euch.*

"Whose eloquence will be adequate to praise me according to my merit? Who can repeat the signal victories I gain, especially in the Holy Sacrament of the altar? There I surmount so powerfully, and with a single blow, the five senses, and with so great authority keep them beneath me that they dare not even breathe against the truth of this mystery; there I reduce so low the loftiest human intelligence, and trample so deep in the earth all the science and reasoning of nature, that they know not where they are, and I hold them for my enemies as declared and ready to do me evil as Satan is, if they be not conquered and ranged under my obedience." (William of Paris, L. de morib. c. 1.)

The ancient representation of Faith was very appropriate. It was pictured as a virgin beautiful as the day, holding in her hand a chalice with a Host, having at her feet prostrate and loaded with chains a great captain who bore upon his brow, pride and insolence—that is, the human mind; around her lay soldiers stiff in death—that is, the senses; below was the motto: *Mysterium fidei*—the mystery of faith.

Verily, when we enter the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, when we gaze at it, and

when we offer it our homage, we should recall this picture; we should see at one side Faith in this guise and with these marks of her power, and on the other behold her disdainfully trampling under foot the presumption of our intellect and the rashness of our senses; then, with closed eyes, with most profound respect, with deep humility, with perfect submission, and pure faith, we should adore the Mystery on the altar; and afterward, in the same sentiments, proceed to the following practice.

II.—PRACTICE OF FAITH.

This practice contains five points:

1. To believe all the truths of the Christian religion, and particularly those we have indicated.

2. To believe them with incomparably more firmness than we do the evident truths of nature.

3. To protest that we will die in a pure, naked, and blind faith in these truths.

4. And this even were the whole world to deny or doubt them.

5. So to believe in spite of whatever may befall us in consequence of our faith.

Thus: I believe all the truths of our holy

religion ; I believe in the Trinity, the Incarnation, the omnipresence of God, his providence in my regard ; and especially in the most holy and most adorable mystery of the Eucharist, and I believe in it most firmly without a doubt, and most simply without an examination, and with a pure, naked, and blind faith, precisely because God has declared it.

Yes, I believe, and I hold for truth this mystery, with greater firmness of mind and more perfect repose of soul than I believe and hold for truth what I see with my eyes, what I touch with my hands, than I believe that the sun shines at midday, or that I am alive ; I believe it above all natural reasons, above all evident demonstrations, all the infallible experiences of the senses, all supernatural visions, and all the other knowledge we can possess in this life, the revelation of God alone taking for me the place, and performing the office of reason, demonstration, experience, vision, and every such thing, being without comparison more than these.

I desire to live and die in this pure, naked, and blind faith in the truth of this mystery ; and I declare now, for the present, and for all the future, before God, before the angels, before men, and before all creatures, my above

said will and desire. I renounce all contrary thoughts I may have, I disavow all contrary words I may say, at whatever time, in whatever place, and upon whatever occasion, protesting that they are not in accordance with my belief and my intention.

And when all men, and even all angels, if so might be, shall deny this truth, or doubt it; when they shall deny and doubt it as much as they wish, as for me, I am irrevocably resolved to live and die in its profession, and I desire no other eucharist, no other sacrifice, no other salvation than what I believe to be in it.

And when, in consequence of my so believing this truth, there shall arise some peril for my honor, or my goods, or my life, or my eternal salvation, I am determined to submit to it willingly.

If necessary, I desire to be lost in this belief; but I know it cannot be my loss; that on the contrary it will save me.

Let us apply these five points to the other mysteries, and thus establish ourselves firmly in faith in their truth; let us accustom ourselves to see things, not with the eyes of the flesh, nor of the natural reason, but with the eyes of faith, and to perform our actions under its motives and principles.

Take care that your faith be not an animal faith, as Tertullian calls it (L. de jejun. c. i. 3), that leans greatly upon the senses, and is a very mixed faith, but seek to have it a pure and naked faith; let it be not only habitual, as in the greater part of Christians, but actual and practical; not sterile, but efficacious and operative to produce good works, according to the manner in which they should be wrought so as to prove useful for our salvation.

III.—MEDITATIONS.

The author recommends two meditations on Faith, which are to be found in the work entitled "*The Illuminative Life of Jesus in the Desert.*"

IV.—READING.

See this heading in Chapter III.

V.—ASPIRATORY VERSES.

"My just man liveth by faith." (Heb. x. 38.) God says: He who is just before me lives and is nourished by faith.

"I am the resurrection and the life. Believest thou this?" (Jno. xi. 25.) Our Lord said to St. Martha: I am the resurrection and

the life. Believest thou this? And she replied: "Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." (Ib. xi. 27.) Yes, Lord, I believe that thou art the Messiah and the Son of the living God.

We ought to represent to ourselves that our Lord addresses us the same question regarding the same mystery, also regarding the mystery of the Eucharist, and the other mysteries, and that we make the same reply: "Yes, Lord, I believe."

"Lord, increase our faith." (Luke xvii. 5.) Lord, increase faith within us, grant that we may have a firm, simple, pure and naked faith, that we may look at things with its eyes, and perform our works with its hands. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

PRACTICE OF UNION WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, BY THE VIRTUE OF HOPE.

I.—THE SUBJECT.

Hope is the Second Theological Virtue. It causes us to hope to receive from God all temporal and eternal blessings, all corporal and spiritual blessings, the blessings of nature, grace, and glory. It causes us to hope for them, because he being omnipotent is able to give them to us; because being perfectly good and goodness itself, he has an extreme inclination to give them to us; because he is infinitely liberal and munificent; and finally, by reason of the deference he renders to the life and death of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and because he has promised to give them to us for the sake of his Son.

Hope is our balm, our cordial, and our consolation in all the sufferings of this life; it is a virtue that has powerful attractions and ravishing charms to win us to its love, and to inspire us with an ardent desire to exercise its acts.

Pure, naked, and blind hope is the hope of great souls, the hope that remains unshaken amid difficulties like a rock in the ocean amid storms; it hopes in the midst of despair and the absence of all human aid, and it rises up to God in proportion as it sees itself cast down among creatures; by a wise and fortunate blindness it shuts its eyes to men, so as not to see their weaknesses nor the strength of its adversaries, and opens them only to look at the power, goodness, and faithfulness of God, and the merit of the blood of his Son; finally, in its whole, and in each of its parts, it is hope only in God, and in no other.

We should exert all our efforts to rise to this pure and perfect hope.

Truly, the sight of what God does for the insects and the worms of the earth, the care he takes to preserve them and provide for their necessities should strongly move us to believe, if we have not lost our reason, that he will provide for our wants, and will watch over us who are his images and the master-pieces of his hand. Considering how he has made for our use the sun, the moon and the stars, the elements, the animals, and all visible things; how he has given us his angels to guide, assist, and defend us; how he has given us his

own Son to take our nature, to assume our miseries, to teach us by his example and words, to wash away our sins with his blood, to gain life for us by his death, and to make us eternally happy, considering all this that God has done for us, we ought to confide and trust in him.

But, added to all this, what takes place in the most holy Eucharist is a lively incentive to our perfect and entire confidence, because our Lord there gives us assurances and tokens of all the blessings he can impart to us, of all that we can ask him, and of all we can need.

1. Our Lord gives himself to us in this adorable mystery under the species of bread and wine.

2. He comes to us destroying substances, strengthening the feebleness of accidents, disuniting things naturally united, and overthrowing the laws of nature.

3. He comes exercising humility, patience, obedience, charity, and other virtues in a high and eminent degree.

4. He comes to unite himself to us in the manner of food which is the most intimate union to be found in nature.

5. He comes, not passible and mortal, but in a state far removed from the attacks of suf-

fering and the power of death, and with a a blessed soul and a glorious body.

We need physical and spiritual blessings, temporal and eternal blessings, the blessings of nature, grace and glory. Our Lord gives them to us in the Blessed Sacrament, and consequently gives us reason to ask them of him, and a certain hope of obtaining them from him in this adorable mystery.

First, physical blessings the most necessary of which are food and drink ; he furnishes us these by putting himself under the species of bread and wine, which are the principal aliments of our bodies.

Secondly, as to spiritual blessings, the state of grace and perfection consists in three things: The first is the reformation of our nature spoiled by sin, the eradication of our vicious inclinations and our bad habits, which is the labor of the purgative life ; the second is the practice of virtues, which is the employment of the illuminative life ; and the third is our union with our Lord, and through him with God, which is the occupation of the unitive life.

Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament does these things in an admirable manner most worthy of our meditation.

First: he destroys the substances of the bread and wine; he separates and disunites things naturally united, that is, the substance and the accidents; he strengthens the weakness of the accidents so that they exist without support; he overthrows the laws of nature.

Secondly: he exercises in a most high and eminent manner humility, obedience, patience, and the other virtues, in order to give us examples, and at the same time communicate to us grace to imitate them. Besides, he raises the accidents above themselves so that they produce the effects of their substances and thus far surpass their own power.

Thirdly: he unites himself for love of us to the accidents of the bread and wine, which are very mean things; he unites himself to us, to our bodies and souls, whence the Blessed Sacrament is called Communion; and he unites himself to us in the quality of food, which forms with the one who receives it the most intimate and perfect of all natural unions, because after a very little time it passes from union to unity.

Finally, with regard to the state of glory and eternal recompense, the Eucharist is called by the Fathers the seed of immortality

and a blessed resurrection; our Lord comes to us in it, not passible and mortal, but in a state incapable of suffering and death, and with his divinity and his blessed humanity which are to constitute the beatitude of our souls and bodies.

The Son of God then, coming to us in such a manner in the most holy Eucharist, invites and even forces us to ask him with unshaken confidence for all these blessings, and to hope for them from his bounty; to hope that he will give us bread and wine, that is, nourishment for our bodies and all that is necessary for our life; that he will give us courage to destroy our vicious inclinations, to conquer our passions, to detach and disunite ourselves from creatures that captivate us, to rise above our nature in order to practice virtues excellently, to unite ourselves with him, and at last to see him and possess him eternally in the state of glory.

Therefore, if the holy Eucharist is called the mystery of our faith, it deserves most justly to be also called the mystery of our hope, and the sacrament of our sweetest expectations. Truly, when we see our Lord coming to us from heaven to earth with such a disposition to give, we ought to go to him

to ask with hope, and to confess that if after this we are still needy and miserable, it is not his fault, but ours.

Consider again with what liberality and profusion he gives himself to us. He gives himself entirely; he gives us his divinity, his soul, his body. Does not one who gives an object of an absolutely infinite value as security for a promise of a few cents, furnish great reason to hope, and an infallible certainty of obtaining from him the few cents? We, relying upon the token our Lord gives us, have much greater reason to hope to receive from him all that is necessary for our bodies and souls.

St. Thomas admiring God's liberality in this mystery, says: "God gave man heaven and earth, and this was the first degree of his bounty; he destined his angels to instruct and defend us, this was the second degree; and the third is that he has given us himself, and in several manners; for he has given himself to accompany us in our pilgrimage, to assist us in our necessities, and to make of his blood the price of our ransom. But the highest degree of his liberality and magnificence is that he has given himself to us to be our food. The other gifts are somewhat apart

from himself; this one is not, but produces an intimate and inseparable union between him and the receiver; whence our Lord says: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me, and I dwell in him." (Opusc. 58, c. 5) Having before us, by day and night and in so many churches, so great and admirable a reason for perfect hope in our Lord in all our necessities, "let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering," as St. Paul says. (Heb. x. 23.) Let us strengthen ourselves in an unshaken hope. "And hope confoundeth not," says the same apostle. (Rom. v. 5.) A hope so well founded, established upon such strong reasons, and supported by such excellent pledges of our Lord's excessive love for us, cannot deceive us.

This is why St. Paul also says: "Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid." (Heb. iv. 16.) Let us go with great confidence to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament where he is as on the throne of his grace and liberality, to obtain mercy and a remedy for all our evils.

When you are afflicted, discomforted, or pained (this is a very good counsel), go for your consolation, not to creatures who fre-

quently instead of curing your disease will make it worse, and in place of pouring, like the pious Samaritan (Luke x. 34), oil and wine upon your wound to heal it, will touch it with fire to inflame it, but go straight, and with faith and confidence, to the Blessed Sacrament, as to your asylum and your altar of refuge.

Expose your affliction and pain to our Lord, and supplicate him to help you; and be certain that you will never come away from this visit without fruit, and that you will always find in some way in the Blessed Sacrament light for your doubts, strength for your weaknesses, consolation for your sorrows, and assistance for all your needs, inasmuch as our Lord is there on purpose to help you, and to produce in you these effects. The prophet Isaiah, speaking figuratively, says: "There shall be a tabernacle for a shade in the day-time from the heat, and for a security and covert from the whirlwind, and from rain." (Is. iv. 6.) The tabernacle where our Lord dwells shall serve you as a shade from the fierceness of the sun, and as a shelter from the whirlwind and the rain, and from all sorts of storms.

Let us then hope strongly in God, and let us put all our confidence in him. "Hope in the Lord God mighty forever," the same prophet

bids us. (Is. xxvi. 4.) Hope steadfastly in the Lord, who is strong and all-powerful.

Let us not hope in creatures, but in our Lord. "I have learned in the Catholic Church, before all things," says St. Augustine, "not to put my hope in any man; for I hear God telling us by Jeremiah: 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.'" (Jer. xvii. 5.) William of Paris says: "He who leans upon man, leans upon a reed which, incapable of supporting him, breaks beneath his weight and wounds his hand." (William of Paris, L. de morib. c. 3.) The pious bishop borrowed this simile from the prophet Ezechiel, who says of Egypt: "Behold thou hast been a staff of a reed to the house of Israel. When they took hold of thee with the hand thou didst break and rend all their shoulder." (Ezech. xxix. 6, 7.) Isaiah, also speaking of Egypt, had already expressed the same thought: "Lo! thou trustest upon this broken staff of a reed, upon Egypt, upon which if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it; so is Pharao, king of Egypt, to all that trust in him." (Is. xxxvi. 6.)

God tells us and repeats it many times, he invites and solicits us with most pressing words, to lean upon him and to establish in him our hope. Do we believe that he speaks

thus for nothing? St. Augustine asks wisely, and after him William of Paris, if we can entertain the wicked thought that if, encouraged by God's words, we should lean upon him, he would be so cruel and deceitful, he who is goodness and truth itself, as to withdraw and let us fall? (Will. of Paris, lec. cit.)

Therefore, convinced and persuaded by these reasons, let us lean boldly upon him, and let us fearlessly place in him our hope for the relief of all our necessities, and let us proceed to the practice.

II.—THE PRACTICE.

Like the Practice of Faith, it should consist in the following five points:

I hope my God and my Saviour, from thy goodness, thy liberality, thy mercy, thy inviolable fidelity to thy promises, from thy power, and especially from seeing thee as I do in the adorable mystery of the Eucharist, that thou wilt deliver me from all evils, and wilt load me with blessings. I hope that thou wilt give me my food, and as many temporal blessings as I need for my salvation. I hope that thou wilt assist me with thy grace to avoid sin, to withstand temptations, to conquer my passions, to correct my bad inclina-

tions, and to destroy my corrupt nature. I hope that thou wilt strengthen my weakness, and enable me to exercise the virtues to perfection and unite myself to thee; and that at last thou wilt open to me the gates of heaven, and permit me to enjoy the eternal beatitude of my body and soul.

Beholding thee in that Host, upon that throne of goodness, liberality, and love, I hope all these blessings from thee above all the hope that can be placed in kings, in rich and generous men, in kindred, in most intimate friends, even for the least things.

I desire to live and die in this lofty confidence, and in this unshaken hope for which in the Blessed Sacrament thou dost give me so much reason.

And when all men shall distrust thee, and esteem that thou wilt not, or that thou canst not assist and defend them, the sight of what thou art, and of what thou dost for me in the Blessed Sacrament, shall always constantly strengthen me in this hope.

And though even this hope should delay to be fulfilled by my deliverance from my evils, and I should be left to stagnate in my afflictions and to be miserable in this world and in the next, thou, nevertheless, wouldst always

be through all, and in spite of all opposition, my refuge and my support.

III.—MEDITATIONS.

Father Saint-Jure under this heading again recommends, in addition to the matter of this chapter, the work entitled "*The Illuminative Life of Jesus in the Desert.*"

IV.—READING.

See this heading in Chapter III.

V.—ASPIRATORY VERSES.

"Offer up the sacrifice of justice, and trust in the Lord." (Ps. iv. 6.) Offer to God the sacrifice of justice and hope in the Lord; supported by the sacrifice and sacrament of his body and blood, trust in him.

"Thou, O Lord, art my hope." (Ps. xc. 9.) Beholding, my Lord, how thou abidest for me in this divine mystery, and what thou doest in it for my salvation, thou art my hope.

"Yes, thou art truly all my hope and all my confidence." (St. August. Manual, cap. 12.)

"Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me." (Is. xxii. 5.) Thou hast placed before me a table spread with an admirable and divine food, to strengthen me against all that afflict me.

CHAPTER X.

PRACTICE OF UNION WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR THE MONTHS OF OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER UNTIL ADVENT, BY THE VIRTUE OF CHARITY.

I.—THE SUBJECT.

We will conclude the exercises of the year by one on Charity, which is likewise the conclusion of the commandments of God, and as St. Paul says, the queen of virtues, in the practice and perfection of which consists the height of the perfection we can acquire in this life.

This most noble and divine virtue, the third and the most perfect of the theological virtues, has for its object and effect to love God, and to love ourselves, our neighbor, and all that is outside of God, solely for the love of God.

William of Paris says that this most excellent virtue is called Charity because it renders God very dear to us, and that without it he is very vile to us since we account him less than a miserable creature, a vain honor, the gain of a few pennies, or a beastly pleasure.

It is pure and bears this name of charity when it is unmixed with any other love; it is naked when it is not covered with any strange affection; it is simple when it is not divided between two objects and does not make pretence of loving God while it really loves another; finally, it is blind when it shuts its eyes to all difficulties, when it considers no trouble and has regard to nothing whatsoever when there is question of loving God and giving him proofs of love.

It is contained in the first commandment of the Old and the New Law: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with all thy strength; that is, with all thy will, with all thy affections, with all thy mind and all thy thoughts, with all thy soul and all thy passions, and with all thy interior and exterior faculties; and thou shalt love him in this manner because he is thy God who merits it of himself alone, and because he is thy Lord who is most worthy of it on account of what he is to thee. These are the motives of this love.

Truly it is a fearful thing for us to love God so little when we have so much reason to love him.

He merits our love because as God he is infinitely perfect and consequently infinitely amiable; and as man, the Incarnate Word, he is sovereignly worthy of it on account of the sovereign perfections of his sacred body and his most holy soul which are incomparably beyond all that is, or ever will be, beautiful and attractive among creatures.

He has made the heavens, the earth, and the whole visible universe for us.

He clothed himself with our nature, he lived thirty-three years amid all kinds of poverty and misery, and then died in an excess of suffering and opprobrium on a cross for our salvation.

He has heaped upon us the riches of grace, and he is preparing for us those of glory.

He has created us, he preserves us, he nourishes us, and keeps us in the world only to love him. The commandment he has given us to love him with all our heart and all our strength is the first, the most important, and the most imperative of all his commandments. He promises us a thousand blessings if we observe it, and he threatens us with a thousand evils, both in this life and in the next, if we disobey it.

In addition, we cannot live without loving

something; and what do we desire, or what can we love more amiable than he? Whose love will procure us more honor, more profit, and more satisfaction than his?

All these reasons show us the extreme and indispensable obligations we are under to love God with all our heart, and therefore are very capable of kindling in us the fire of charity. But, besides these, I find that the holy Eucharist possesses a most particular and most powerful virtue to produce this effect.

St. Ambrose, speaking of the Theological Virtues, says that our Lord is our faith in baptism, our hope in the resurrection, and our charity in the Blessed Sacrament. (L. 3. de Virgin.) The angelical Doctor, St. Thomas, relates that this sacrament is sometimes called *Sacramentum charitatis* — the sacrament of love (Opusc. 58; c. 3); and before him, St. Bernard all dazzled by its light and burning with its flames, said: "Think you that you are able to esteem worthily enough, what, and how great is this Holy of holies, this Sacrament of sacraments, this Love of loves, and this Sweetness that contains all sweets?" (Serm. id. cæna. Dom.)

And St. Ephrem earlier than either calls it fire, which has always been considered the

symbol of love; this is how he speaks: "Truly, what God's only Son, our Saviour, has done for us, is above all our admiration, all our thoughts, and all our words. He has given us for food and drink, fire and a spirit, that is to say, his body and his blood." (De Nat. Dei non curiose scrut.) He calls this sacrament fire and a spirit because it is not a material, but a spiritual fire. St. Chrysostom also gives it the same name (Hom. 6 in Matth.); and several other writers explain in this sense these words of Leviticus: "The fire on the altar shall always burn." (Levit. vi. 12. cf. Lorin. Ibid.) Fire, that is the Blessed Sacrament, shall always burn upon my altar.

The Council of Trent utters these beautiful and remarkable words in reference to our subject: "Our Saviour being about to depart and return to his Father, instituted this sacrament, wherein he has manifested to men the extreme affection he bears them, and has, as it were, poured upon them the treasures of his love, making this mystery the abridgment of his wonders." (Sess. xiii. c. 2.)

Likewise St. John, speaking of its institution, says: "Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the

world, he loved them unto the end" (Jno. xiii. 1), giving them his body and his blood for their food. Now let us see how this love has been manifested.

Love has this characteristic, namely, to seek and procure by all possible means the union of the lover with the beloved; it has a uniting power, says St. Denis (L. de divin. nomin. c. 3); it causes the lover to give generously and profusely all he can to the beloved; it surmounts all obstacles that may be opposed to its designs, and it desires with unspeakable earnestness their execution and spares nothing to accomplish it. Our Lord has done all this in the Blessed Sacrament in an admirable manner that delights the angels and ought to delight men.

Our Lord, urged by his infinite love for man, united himself to him in the two most intimate and perfect of all ways: First, by uniting his person with an individual humanity in the mystery of the Incarnation, wherein human nature was elevated in that humanity, and consequently all of us in a certain manner, to the divine nature and to all its infinite perfections; Secondly, as only that single humanity could be united to him in that mystery, and nevertheless he desired to unite himself with

all men individually, he found out an expedient truly admirable, an invention that surprises and astonishes all minds, that is, the Blessed Sacrament.

He unites himself intimately with all men as far as is possible ; he unites himself as food, which forms with the one who receives it, as we have said, the closest, most inseparable, and most perfect of all natural unions ; he unites himself daily, and in some manner as many times as there are atoms in the host to contain him entire, because he is, like our souls in our bodies, entire in the whole host, and in each of its parts ; by this union he gives himself to us, he gives us his body, his soul, his divinity, his virtues, the labors of his life, the fruits of his death, and all his possessions ; and by means of that multitude of presences in the host, as we have remarked, he unites and gives himself with all his possessions to us as many times as he is present in the host. So great is his desire to unite himself to us, to apply to us his merits, to communicate to us his virtues, to bestow upon us his blessings, and to render us henceforth as happy as he is able to do ! Our Lord knows that our happiness in this life and in the next consists in our union with God, and

in our possessing him, and that it is certain that, no matter what God gives us, even though he should give us millions of worlds, we will not be happy unless he gives us himself, because he is our end and consequently our beatitude ; so the extreme love he bears us, infinitely ingenious, prompted him to invent this wonderful means by which he unites us to his humanity, and through his humanity to his divinity ; and thus he makes us happy, and gives us possession of the paradise we may enjoy on earth, and prepares us for that which awaits us in heaven.

Although our Lord is now impassible and immortal, he nevertheless places himself in the host as though he still suffered, and he is there as if dead, since, by the power of the words of consecration, his blood would be, if it were possible, separated from his body to teach us the excess of his love. It is as though he said to us : "I have for thy sake endured the agonies of my passion, and have suffered the most ignominious death that ever was ; I desire to apply to thee unceasingly the value of my blood and the merit of my death ; and if it were necessary for thy salvation that I should die again, thou mayest judge by the state in which thou seest me, and by the love

I testify toward thee, that I am ready to die again once, and a thousand times, and that I would do it."

What appears most admirable in this mystery, is our Lord's burning desire to institute this divine sacrament, in order to be able to unite himself to us, to give himself to us, and to enrich us with his blessings.

Urged by this desire he said, before establishing it: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer." (Luke xxii. 15.) I have ardently desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer death. Our desire of a thing is an evident and positive sign of our affection for it; we do not desire things that are indifferent to us, but those we hold dear. Our Lord says that he burned with the desire to eat this pasch, because he was extremely anxious to unite and give himself to us.

All that we have said above proves clearly the vehemence of this desire. But in addition to all that, is it not to desire with incredible ardor, to come whence he comes, and in the manner he comes, and to do what he does that he may come and unite himself to us?

He comes from the highest heaven, which is almost infinitely remote from the earth.

He comes in an instant, so anxious is he to come to us, and to come immediately.

If we should see some great personage, some very wise man, some one filling the most exalted position, a powerful, prudent, and aged monarch, running with all his might through the streets, what would we think? What would we say? We would say that he had either lost his senses, or was possessed with an inexplicable desire for the thing after which he was running. It is a far greater wonder to see the Son of God coming so quickly.

But the prodigies he performs in himself and outside of himself, in order that he may come and be united with us, make clearer than the day his violent desire of this union. He puts himself at the same time in heaven and on earth; he puts himself in two places and in an innumerable number of places, since he is in as many places as there are consecrated hosts in the whole Church; he contracts himself and makes himself so little that he is reduced to a point; he deprives himself of the use of his senses; he abases his majesty, he covers his glory with a vile exterior; he unites himself to the accidents; he disguises himself, and in such a manner that neither the most ingenious poets, nor the most impas-

sioned hearts have ever invented any artifice, any subtlety, any transformation or metamorphose that resembles it. In addition, he exposes himself to a thousand insults, and he resolves to endure them for the gratification of his desire; and for the same purpose he subjects himself to the word of a priest, who may sometimes be his mortal enemy.

Outside of himself he overthrows the laws of nature, destroying the substances, sustaining the accidents without their natural support, and giving them strength to do the work of their substance.

Behold whence our Lord comes, how he comes, and what he does, in order to unite himself to us! And behold how he puts himself in the host, and how he remains in the tabernacles often for whole days and nights quite alone, waiting with invincible patience for persons to come to visit him, to come to speak to him, and to prepare themselves so that he may unite himself with them, may give himself to them, and do them good; for this is what he desires ardently, since he does not come so far, nor so quickly, nor with so many wonders, not to continue the ardor of his desire! Oh! what a desire! Oh! what love!

II.—THE AFFECTIONS.

If our Lord so ardently desires to come to us, it is certainly most just that we should desire to go to him. If he says to us: "I have earnestly desired to eat this pasch with you;" we, in view of the infinite inequality of dignity and perfections between him and us, have far greater reason to say to him: "With desire I have desired to eat it with thee." For what does he gain by it? What advantage does light receive from communicating itself to darkness? Wealth from giving itself to poverty? Beauty from uniting itself to ugliness? Purity to corruption? Wisdom to folly?—which means, our Lord to us. Are not all the gain and glory ours?

If, then, being what he is, he desires and seeks with such burning affection to come to us, with what affection and what transports ought not we, being what we are, to desire to go to him? St. Chrysostom says, speaking of this: "Do you not see how eagerly babes bound into their mothers' arms and take the breast? We should do the same with regard to the Holy Eucharist. For this reason the early Christians called it *Desiderata*—the things desired; and when they baptized the

catechumens who received directly after their baptism, they were accustomed to sing Psalm XLI.: 'As the heart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O my God.' As the hart runneth from the pack, and parched with thirst seeks the fountains of water, so my soul, O my God, desires thee, longs for thee, and sighs after thee."

The saints, for instance Catherine of Sienna and Catherine of Genoa, languished and pined with the desire of Communion; St. Catherine of Genoa, as soon as she saw the host in the hands of the priest, cried out with admirable fervor: "Make haste, make haste; send it to the depths of my heart, for it is my strength." Cardinal James de Vitry says of Blessed St. Mary d'Ognie: "It was her life to receive the body of Jesus Christ, and to be deprived of it for any length of time was her death; for she experienced in herself the truth of these words of our Lord: 'Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.'" (Jno. vi. 54.)

Therefore, we ought to ardently desire to communicate; but remark, concerning this desire, two important things:

The first is, that however great is our Lord's

desire of coming to us, it is always regulated and governed by obedience, for he is present in the host only at the word of the priest. In the same way, however strong your affection and desire for Holy Communion is, it should always be subject to your spiritual superiors to grant or refuse it, according as they judge to be most useful to your soul.

Frequently the refusal well accepted and borne, will be more glorious to God, and more meritorious to you than the permission, because your desire will be annihilated, and your self-will destroyed by your submission to God. St. Luke relates that the disciples of Emmaus knew our Lord only in the breaking of bread: "Their eyes were opened and they knew him" in the breaking of bread. (Luke xxiv. 31.) Upon which St. Bernard wisely remarks: "If you would know our Lord, you must break yourself as he is broken, you must break your will, renounce your desires, and annihilate your sentiments; after that you shall know and enjoy our Lord." (Hom. de discip. eunt. in Emmaus.)

The second thing is that this desire ought to strongly animate us to prepare in an excellent manner to receive the Blessed Sacrament, and to make our thanksgiving afterward

with great perfection ; more especially because the better we do these things, the more our Lord will be disposed to unite himself intimately with us and enrich us, which is all he desires. For we may well believe that he has not so wonderful and burning a desire to come to us only to do nothing for us, or to do us harm, which however will be the case if we do not receive him as we should ; rather his purpose in coming is to communicate to us abundantly the fruits of his life and death, and to bestow upon us his treasures, and he executes this purpose always according as our Communions are good.

Our desire then should lead us to prepare most carefully for Communion, and to approach with most firm and simple faith, with singular humility and profound reverence, with a lively sorrow for our sins, with a strong confidence in our Lord, whose burning desire to come to us and to do us good is a powerful motive of this confidence ; with an ardent love deriving it from his love for us and kindling our fire from his, and with all the other dispositions we have indicated in their order.

As our Lord works prodigies in himself and in nature in order to come to unite himself with us, overturning the obstacles that oppose

his coming and his union, so we likewise should do great things, destroying our vicious nature and surmounting all difficulties in order to be fit to go to unite ourselves to him.

It is also just as important to employ the time after Communion in conversing with our Lord, in thanking him for his visit, and especially for the extreme love he manifests toward you, for the ardent desire he had to come to you, to unite himself with you, and to do you good, begging and conjuring him by the excess of that love and the ardor of that desire to truly unite himself to you and you to him, to purify you, sanctify you, illumine you, warm you, strengthen you, animate you with his spirit, and apply to you the fruits of his passion and death.

Say to him: Effect in me, my dear Saviour, that for which thou hast come. Wouldst thou have come so far, and in such haste, to do nothing, and to return just as thou camest? Hast thou produced such wonderful and prodigious changes in thyself and in all nature, to change nothing in me and to leave me as thou findest me? I know not how to persuade myself that thou hadst so great a desire to come and unite thyself to me, and to give me thy divinity, thy humanity, the fruits of thy

labors, the treasures of thy blood, and some share in thy virtues, if in reality thou dost not give them to me, but sufferest me to ever remain in my imperfections and vices.

Let us thus fervently approach Holy Communion and receive our Lord, as much for his interest as for ours. For his interest let us receive to give him pleasure and to afford him a gratification he desires so much; for on the one hand it is clear that the more one desires a thing the greater is the joy the possession of it affords; and on the other, that our Lord desires with incredible affection to come to us, to unite himself to us, to apply to us the merits of his blood and enable us to enjoy the fruit of his labors, and consequently that we cannot do anything more agreeable to him than to assist him to come to us and enrich us, and thus satisfy his desire and accomplish his wish. For our interest, let us receive on account of the inestimable blessings we will derive from our Communion.

From all this it must be inferred that for most just reasons a faithful soul should never be prevented or deterred from communicating; because otherwise a singular displeasure will be given our Lord by depriving him of something he desires so ardently, and a great wrong

will be done the soul by keeping from it so great a blessing.

You will tell me: A soul should be very pure to communicate. I reply: It is true; but if we regard the infinite purity of the God who is received, our purity, though we should take a hundred years and an eternity to purify ourselves, and even the purity of the Seraphim and Cherubim, will never be sufficiently great, because, according to the maxim of philosophy, there can be no proportion nor measure between that which has limits and that which has none. But we should learn to what one is absolutely obliged in order to communicate worthily. It is to be pure from all mortal sin, and not from venial sin; otherwise, who could communicate, since those that are most just, as the wise man says, fall seven times? (Prov. xxiv. 16.) And an apostle, St. John the beloved disciple, renders this testimony with respect to himself, and to all men: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1. Jno. i. 8.)

Most certainly we should endeavor to bring the most exact purity possible to the reception of this adorable mystery, and should prepare ourselves for it, as we have already said, with very great diligence, in order to receive

fully its fruits according to our Lord's desire and plan; but we must not require of ourselves or of others, angelical purity, nor impossible dispositions.

Two reasons drawn from the Blessed Sacrament itself, show this to us plainly: the first, the one St. Theresa used to excuse the faults that the misery, frailty, and ignorance of men commit toward our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, is that he is there hidden and unknown; for although he is truly there in body and soul, we see nothing of him any more than if he were not there. On account, therefore, of his being there thus disguised and invisible; of his being really there and yet apparently not there, the faults committed against him in that state are less than if he were visible in his majesty and glory.

The second reason is derived from the extreme desire our Lord has of coming to us, which does not at all harmonize with a preparation so pure and perfect, and consequently so difficult; because when we greatly desire a thing we render the acquisition of it as easy as possible; for example, if you anxiously desire a friend to visit you and that his coming should afford you singular joy, you do not tell him that you do not want him to come ex-

cepting when it rains in torrents, or when it freezes hard, or at a very inconvenient time, or when you know he cannot come, for this would be to declare plainly, in the opinion of everybody, that you do not care much about his coming at all, since you appoint his visit so he cannot make it, or only with so much trouble as to render it very difficult and almost impossible.

Therefore our Lord, not considering what is due to himself, but what it is in our power to offer him, and his own desire to see us, does not require of us as a condition of visiting or receiving the Blessed Sacrament a disposition so extremely difficult, but such a one as may be easy to all according to their capacities.

This is clearly shown in the parable the Church uses as the Gospel of the Mass of the Sunday in the octave of Corpus Christi. In this parable our Lord relates that those who were invited to the feast, a figure of the Eucharist, having excused themselves most uncivilly and rudely, the master commanded his steward to go quickly through the streets and lanes of the city, and to bring in the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame ; and it was done. And because there was yet room the master again commanded the steward to

go out of the city and search the highways and hedges and invite the poor that he would find lying by the roadside, and urge them to come, and even compel them; seeming by this to wish to force them. (Luke xiv. 16.)

What can be clearer and stronger than the words of this parable? Go out quickly—*exi cito;* search everywhere, in the streets and public places, in the fields, even among the hedges—*in plateas et vicos civitatis, in vias et sepes.* And for whom? For the poor, the infirm, the weak, the blind, the lame—*pauperes, ac debiles, et cæcos, et claudos;* bring them, push them, compel them to come—*introduc huc, compelle intrare.*

In conclusion, I wish to place before the eyes of all my readers an excellent picture of many of the things we have said above, particularly of the desire of Communion, the preparation for it, the benefit of receiving it, and the thanksgiving after receiving; this picture is found in the history of Tobias. (Tob. iv.) It is related that Tobias the father having sent his son to the city of Rages in the country of the Medes, to obtain from a man named Gabelus a sum of money he had lent him several years before, the young Tobias had no sooner started than Anna his mother began

to weep and to say to her husband: "Thou hast taken the staff of our old age and sent him away from us. I wish the money for which thou hast sent him had never been. For our poverty was sufficient for us, that we might account it as riches that we saw our son." (Tob. v. 23, 24, 25.) And when the son did not return on the day appointed, but was absent much longer than the period assigned for his journey, the mother redoubled her lamentations and tears, and her husband even shared her apprehensions, and, as the history relates, "they began both to weep together." (Tob. x. 3.) But the mother whose tenderness was greatest, could no longer endure the absence of this dear son, and overcome by her grief, cried out: "Wo, wo is me, my son! why did we send thee to go to a strange country, the light of our eyes, the staff of our old age, the comfort of our life, the hope of our posterity? We having all things together in thee alone, ought not to have let thee go from us." (Ib. x. 4, 5.)

Her husband endeavored to console her and dry her tears, "but she could by no means be consoled." (Ib. x. 7.) She would receive no consolation and was desolate in her sorrow. What grief, what regret for the absence of

this dear son! How violent a desire for his return!

Have we not certainly as much, and vastly more reason to mourn the absence of our Lord, and to desire his return in the Blessed Sacrament? Every word that this mother, transported by her affection, says of her son, may with much greater appropriateness be applied to our Lord. This is the first object in our picture.

The second is Anna's violent desire of her son's return, a desire which prompted her to leave her house every day to look all about to see if he were not coming, and to go out of the city into all the roads by which he might return to behold him afar off if she could. "Running out every day, she looked round about, and went into all the ways by which there seemed any hope her son might return, that she might if possible see him coming afar off." (Ib. x. 7.) More than this, she ascended to the summit of a neighboring mountain whence she could discern at a great distance travelers that approached, and here she sat alone and motionless for whole hours and days, with her eyes fixed in the direction from which she believed Tobias would come. "Anna sat beside the way daily, on the top of a hill,

from whence she might see afar off." (Tob. xi. 5.)

Consider this second object in the picture. The desire that inflames the soul for the return of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and for the possession of him, should incite it to discover all the ways, and employ all the means of preparing well to receive him, should prompt it to retire from creatures and enter into itself for recollection, and should move it to ascend the mountains, that is to make excellent and exalted acts of faith, adoration, humility, contrition, hope, love, and the other virtues of which we have treated.

While this affectionate mother was on the mountain watching for the arrival of her son, "she saw him afar off, and presently perceived it was her son coming; and returning she told her husband." (Tob. xi. 6.) She saw him afar off, and as the eyes of love are very quick, she recognized him immediately and hastened to tell her husband. When at last this beloved son so bitterly wept, so earnestly desired, and so long awaited, arrived and entered the house, who could describe the joy and delight of the father and mother? "The father receiving him, kissed him, as did also his wife, and they began to weep for joy."

(Ib. xi. 11.) They both wept, not now for sadness, but for joy.

This third part of our picture reveals to us the divine and exceeding satisfaction that well prepared souls receive from the coming of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, a satisfaction which, as St. Bernard says, far surpasses all the pleasures derived from creatures, and which is only marred by its short duration.

The joy of Tobias and Anna was greatly increased when they saw their son returning with more goods than they had hoped for. But what proportion did these goods bear to the treasures of immense value, which our Lord brings to rejoice the soul that receives them?

Finally, as a model of thanksgiving after Communion, the angel Raphael, who, by a special favor of God, had visibly accompanied, protected, and instructed the young Tobias during his entire journey, said to him: "As soon as thou shalt come into thy house, forthwith adore the Lord thy God, and giving thanks to him, go to thy father and kiss him." (Tob. xi. 7.) We should do the same after having received our Lord.

The angel continuing to instruct Tobias, told him to put the gall of the fish he had

directed him to keep, upon the eyes of his blind father, assuring him that their sight would be restored; which truly happened after he had annointed them for about half an hour. "He stayed about half an hour." (Tob. xi. 14.)

What is signified by this fish's gall that must be applied to blind eyes? Assuredly the merits of the bitter passion and painful death of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is that mysterious fish so beautiful spoken of by the sibyls, and which we must by prayer and by all other means after Communion, apply to our understanding to enlighten it, and to our diseased faculties to heal them.

The half-hour of application of the remedy indicates the time we should continue our thanksgiving; during this time we should do all we can to thank our Saviour, and should employ every invention to testify our gratitude. For if, as the Scripture relates, the two Tobiases desired to give as a recompense to the charitable traveling companion, whom they as yet knew not, the half of all the goods the young Tobias had brought back, and if, after having learned from himself that he was not a man, but one of the highest archangels, they were so astonished and surprised that

trembling they fell to the ground on their faces ; and if, even when reassured by the angel, they remained prostrate for three hours, blessing God and thanking him for such a favor (Tob. xii. 15 and 22) ; what should not our sentiments be, what posture should we not assume to thank our Lord for the benefit so greatly exceeding, for the favor so infinitely surpassing the one he conferred upon Tobias, with which he honors us in each Communion ?

III.—THE PRACTICE.

It should be similiar to that of the preceding virtues, Faith and Hope :

Yes, O my Lord and my God, I desire and and I wish most ardently to love thee with all my heart and all my strength, because thou art worthy of being infinitely loved on account of thy infinite perfections, and on account of the innumerable benefits thou hast bestowed upon me, thou dost daily bestow upon me, and thou dost design to bestow upon me ; and especially on account of what thou dost do for my salvation, and of what thou dost give me in the Holy Eucharist.

I desire and resolve to love thee more than all else that is lovable in the whole universe.

I declare that I will live and die in this love

which I owe thee, and which I am resolved to give to thee.

And this even were none else to love thee.

And notwithstanding whatsoever may befall me in consequence of it.

The love of our neighbor should follow and flow from the love of God as from its true source.

Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament teaches it to us in the most excellent manner, and obliges us to it most effectively, because by testifying so much love toward our neighbor and doing for him such wonderful things, he undoubtedly renders him most worthy of being loved; and because he has instituted this sacrament under the species of bread and wine, symbols of fraternal charity and union, inasmuch as the bread is made of several grains of wheat, and the wine of several fruits of the vine united together. We ought thus to be united in charity. St. Paul says: "We being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread." (1 Cor. x. 17.) Participating in one same bread which is the Blessed Sacrament, we ought all to form one bread and one body although we are many.

As when two things are united to a third,

they are also united between themselves, according to the maxim of philosophers, the faithful being all united in heart and spirit to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, must of necessity be united among themselves.

Moreover, as all the consecrated hosts that are in France, Italy, Spain, and elsewhere, are very different in figure, taste, and the other exterior accidents, but all nevertheless are one same living and vivifying Bread, because the same Jesus Christ is in all; so while all the faithful that communicate worthily may differ in nation, condition, complexion, and other natural qualities, they all agree in Jesus Christ, whom they receive, and by whom they are animated.

And neither more nor less than all the hosts lose by the consecration their own substance to receive one common to all, that is our Lord; so those who communicate as they should, humble their own spirit, their own will, and their individual sentiments, which are the ordinary sources of discussions and quarrels, to follow the will and judgment of others, and adopt sentiments common and uniform in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

This is something that cannot be done without difficulty, because in order to do it, it is

necessary to break and bruise ourselves; we are just like the grains of wheat and the grapes, which cannot be united to form one same bread and one same wine without being previously broken and crushed. And as, if there is rupture and division of this bread and wine after the consecration, it is only in the species, and not in Jesus Christ, who always remains inviolable and indivisible in his integrity; so, if sometimes there is some difference and disunion among the faithful, it must not affect charity nor penetrate to the heart, but be only in exterior matters that constrain them.

In order to practice worthily and constantly charity toward our neighbor, it is absolutely necessary to establish well in our memories the presence of God, to know how to make a good use of everything, and to acquire a great depth of humility, patience, and annihilation of our own caprices.

IV.—MEDITATIONS.

As before, Father Saint-Jure recommends that these be taken from the work, "*The Illuminative Life of Jesus in the Desert.*"

V.—READINGS.

See Chapter III.

VI.—ASPIRATORY VERSES.

Charity toward God.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment." (Matt. xxii. 37, 38)

"With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you." (Ex. Luke xxii. 15.) I desire with incredible ardor to eat this passover with you.

"Who will give us of his flesh that we may be filled?" (Job. xxxi. 31.) Ah! who will give me of that virginal and divine flesh, the flesh of my Saviour, that I may be fed?

"O Desire of the everlasting hills!" (Gen. xlix. 26.) O Desire of the eternal hills, Desire of noble and sublime souls, and object of all aspirations!

"Thou art the only desirable, the only desired." (Cant. v. 16 juxto text. hebr.) Thou art the only desirable, and the one to whom all our affections should tend as to their centre.

"My soul hath desired thee in the night; yea, and with my spirit within me in the morning early I will watch to thee." (Is. xxvi. 9.) My soul hath earnestly desired thee

during the night; and in the pain of thy absence, my spirit, from a holy impatience for thy return, is agitated and moved within me; my eyes shall always be open and my heart turned toward thee, until thou dost return.

Charity toward our Neighbor.

"A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another as I have loved you." (Jno. xiii. 34.)

"This is my commandment: That you love one another as I have loved you." (Jno. xv. 12.) I give you a new commandment which is mine that I prefer to all the others: It is that you should love one another as I have loved you.

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." (Jno. xiii. 35.) By this mark they will know that you are my disciples.

"I pray that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us. That they may be one, as we also are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (Jno. xvii. 21, 22, 23.) I pray thee, Father, that all those who believe in me may be united to us, and among themselves, as we are united; that

I may be in them by grace and love; by natural and adoptive fraternity founded upon my incarnation; by imitation and resemblance as a master in his disciples; by the mystical union of the head with its members, which is that of my Church with me; and by a real and intimate penetration as their food and their life in the Sacrament of my Body and Blood. As thou art in me by nature and by grace, may they also contract with us and among themselves, the holiest, the most divine, and the most perfect union possible on earth.

"My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth." (1. Jno. iii. 18.) My children, let us not love God nor our neighbor, with only words and tongue, but let us love them effectually and truly.

VII.—CONCLUSION.

In conclusion of all that relates to the three Theological Virtues, I desire to add a point of great consequence concerning their practice in order to still further encourage to it those who shall read this book.

I suppose, in the first place, that a thing is never perfect nor complete until it has reached its first principle; for, as it is from it that it derives its being, it is also in it that it must

find the perfection of it; from which follows that, according as it approaches its first principle it becomes perfect, and according as it departs from it, it becomes imperfect and vicious. Thus we see that heat is always diminished in proportion as it leaves the fire and is increased according as it approaches it, and in the fire it is perfected and consummated. The same holds true of light with regard to the sun; and of man in respect to God, since his union with God constitutes his excellency and all his happiness, and on the contrary his separation from God is the source of his faults and his ruin. This is conformable to these words of the Prophet-king: "Behold, they that go far from thee shall perish; it is good for me to adhere to my God." (Ps. lxxii. 27, 28.)

In the second place, I suppose that, according to this truth, as God is our first principle who has produced us, and as our understanding is a participation in his understanding, our memory in his memory, and our will in his will, in order to procure for these faculties of our soul the glory and perfection of which they are capable, we must of necessity unite them to God, we must unite our understand-

ing to his understanding, our memory to his memory, and our will to his will.

This being granted, I say that this union is effected by the three Theological Virtues; that our understanding is united to God's understanding by faith, our memory to his memory by hope, and our will to his will by charity.

But I say further that, in order to bring about this union, these faculties of our soul must be prepared for it by the annihilation of their natural modes of action, so that God finding them void of their own acts, and consequently fit for him and his operations, may unite himself to them and render them perfect and divine.

Now, the natural modes of action of these three faculties are as follows: The understanding has naturally a great inclination for knowledge which causes it to constantly seek for something that it does not know; and having found this, it regards it, considers and studies it, reasons upon it, draws conclusions and passes judgment, and makes experiments of it; it desires to know things from the experience of the senses, is not willing to trust to others, but would know for itself and by its own light.

The memory preserves images of all the things upon which we rely, which are ourselves and creatures. For we naturally cherish, if we do not watch ourselves very closely, a certain secret confidence in ourselves, in our mind, our knowledge, our industry, our riches, and the other advantages we may possess. We also trust much in our relatives, our friends, in remedies for our diseases, and in other creatures for all our wants.

Our will is naturally inclined to love itself and us exceedingly, and to love nothing else save for love of us.

All these modes of action are to these faculties hindrances to their union with God, and consequently must be utterly destroyed. This is done perfectly by the three Theological Virtues. Faith chases from the understanding all natural methods of knowledge, and banishes from it even all the other means of learning; it extinguishes all its lights, and produces in it a night of profound darkness and a great void, which puts it in a state capable of fully receiving God and fundamental truth. God communicating himself to the understanding thus denuded of its own knowledge, and uniting himself to it by faith, elevates and ennobles it in an admirable manner,

and renders it perfect and divine in the highest degree possible on earth. To speak truly, the real effect of faith is to elevate the mind to First Truth to receive its instructions, and to believe is nothing else than to unite our understanding to God's by means of submission, acquiescence, and respect.

Hope divests the soul of all reliance upon itself and upon creatures, and produces in the memory a forgetfulness of all created supports, and by this means renders it capable of being united to the omnipotence of God, and of receiving his assistance and strength.

Finally, charity deprives the will of all its natural fashions of willing and loving, and disposes it to union with God, who by this union enables it to will as he wills, and imparts to it a portion of the love with which he loves himself and all things.

When, therefore, you would practice faith, you must raise your understanding above itself and all its own modes of action, and must renounce your knowledge, your experience, and all other methods of learning, and in this elevation and blindness must produce, first, in general, the five acts of which we have spoken in the chapter on Faith, and then refer them to some particular truths, such as the

existence of God and your own nothingness, his presence everywhere, his providence, or others that you will find in the same place.

You must employ the same method to practice hope and charity, rendering your memory and your will, by separating them from the obstacles and disinclinations they have to union with God, fit for this union, and consequently for their perfection, as we have just explained ; and you must then make acts of these two virtues according to the models we have given in the chapters which treat of them.

THE END.

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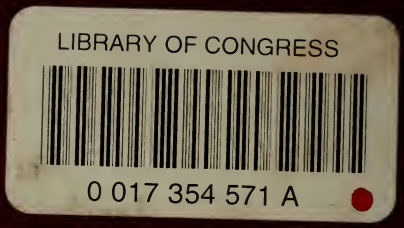
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